



FINAL REPORT

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME ON IMPROVING ADOLESCENTS' LIVES IN AFGHANISTAN (2017-2020)

CENTER FOR EVALUATION AND
DEVELOPMENT **FEBRUARY 2022**



Center for Evaluation
and Development



د هر ماشوم لپاره
برای هر طفل

This study was commissioned by the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office (ACO), and this report was submitted by the Center for Evaluation and Development (C4ED).

The points of view expressed in this document may not represent the views of UNICEF ROSA, the UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office, nor the authorities of Afghanistan.

Prepared for UNICEF ROSA and UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office by:

Irene Dejuan, Dr. Ravi Baghel, Dr. Martin C. Lukas and Verena Himmelreich

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research team acknowledges the very useful guidance and excellent support provided by the staff of the UNICEF Afghanistan country office and field offices in Bamyan and Badghis throughout the study process.

The research team is very grateful to our local partner organisation, Al Mansoor Solutions Ltd., for their local expertise and excellent support provided in planning, coordinating, and facilitating the data collection. We also thank the staff of WV and AKF for supporting us during field research in very challenging circumstances.

Furthermore, very good research assistance was provided by Sohaib Warsi and Souhayp Zaryah.

CONTENTS

Contents	i
List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	iv
List of Acronyms	v
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vi
Overview of the intervention.....	vi
Objectives and intended audience.....	vi
Evaluation methodology.....	vi
Key findings	vii
Key conclusions.....	viii
Key recommendations	viii
1 BACKGROUND	1
1.1 COUNTRY CONTEXT	1
1.2 PROGRAMME SUMMARY	2
1.3 EVALUATION BACKGROUND	4
2 EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, AND SCOPE	6
2.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE.....	6
2.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE	6
3 EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	8
3.1 EVALUATION APPROACH	8
3.2 THEORY OF CHANGE.....	9
3.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONS	11
3.4 DATA COLLECTION	11
3.4.1 <i>Methodology</i>	11
3.4.2 <i>Study area</i>	12
3.4.3 <i>Sampling strategy</i>	12
3.4.4 <i>Research instruments / Guides and data collection</i>	13
3.4.5 <i>Data collection process</i>	14
3.4.6 <i>Coding and data analysis</i>	14
3.4.7 <i>Limitations and constraints</i>	14
3.5 GENDER AND ADOLESCENTS' RIGHTS.....	15
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	16
3.6.1 <i>Engagement of participants, consent and safeguarding procedures</i>	16
3.6.2 <i>Ethical procedures during data collection</i>	17
4 EVALUATION FINDINGS	18
4.1 RELEVANCE.....	18
4.1.1 <i>Adaptability of IALA activities to adolescents' needs and contexts</i>	18
4.1.2 <i>Gender equality in MAG composition and structure</i>	20
4.1.3 <i>Role of literacy and inclusion of illiterate children</i>	21
4.1.4 <i>MAG mentors/trainers' profiles and skills</i>	22

4.1.5	<i>Suitability of village premises to host MAG activities</i>	23
4.1.6	<i>Relevance of content of ‘New Homes, New Lives’ drama for supporting IALA’s outcomes</i>	23
4.2	FIDELITY/COHERENCE	24
4.2.1	<i>Alignment of activities with cultural norms and their local reception</i>	24
4.2.2	<i>Reception of trainings for religious leaders</i>	25
4.2.3	<i>Comprehensiveness of trainings for influential community members</i>	26
4.2.4	<i>Community and religious leaders’ use of training contents</i>	26
4.2.5	<i>Implementation modality and partnerships between UNICEF, implementing NGOs and service providers</i>	27
4.2.6	<i>Activity completion, divergence in implementation and operational challenges</i>	28
4.2.7	<i>Reliability, accuracy, and consistency of programme monitoring systems</i>	29
4.4	COVERAGE	30
4.4.1	<i>Reachability and participation of the intended target groups</i>	30
4.4.2	<i>Role of gender in participation</i>	31
4.4.3	<i>Inclusiveness of vulnerable groups</i>	31
4.4.4	<i>Parents’ support and reception of MAGs and community discussions</i>	32
4.4.5	<i>Support of community and religious leaders to adolescents for MAG and community discussions</i>	33
4.4.6	<i>Participation of community members in Community Discussions</i>	34
4.5	EFFECTIVENESS	35
4.5.1	<i>Transfer of knowledge to adolescents and building of life skills</i>	35
4.5.2	<i>Adolescents’ communication within peers and the cascade learning approach</i>	37
4.5.3	<i>Adolescents’ communication within their families</i>	39
4.5.4	<i>Adolescent communication with leaders, policymakers, and authorities</i>	40
4.5.5	<i>Community mobilisation for increased awareness on child protection issues and consensus building regarding social norms</i>	41
4.5.6	<i>Contribution of IALA to adolescent empowerment, disaggregated by gender</i>	43
4.5.7	<i>Variations in MAG effectiveness across contexts and time</i>	46
4.5.8	<i>Contribution of ALCs to education of adolescents</i>	47
4.5.9	<i>Overall achievement of IALA’s goals</i>	48
4.6	SUSTAINABILITY	54
4.6.1	<i>Impediments to the continuation of activities and participation</i>	54
4.6.2	<i>Enablers to continuation of activities and participation</i>	55
5	ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS USING PROCESS TRACING	57
5.1	THEORY OF CHANGE VALIDATION	57
5.1.1	<i>Assumptions</i>	57
5.1.2	<i>Inputs</i>	58
5.1.3	<i>Activities</i>	59
5.1.4	<i>Outputs</i>	59
5.1.5	<i>Outcomes</i>	59
5.2	EXPLAINING OUTCOME 1	59
5.2.1	<i>Intermediate outcome 1.1a:</i>	60
5.2.2	<i>Intermediate outcome 1.1b:</i>	60
5.2.3	<i>Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.1c:</i>	60
5.2.4	<i>Intermediate outcome 1.2a</i>	61
5.2.5	<i>Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.2b</i>	61

5.2.6	<i>Intermediate outcome 1.3a</i>	62
5.2.7	<i>Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.3b</i>	62
5.2.8	<i>Intermediate outcome 1.4a</i>	62
5.2.9	<i>Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.4b</i>	63
5.2.10	<i>Final outcome</i>	63
5.3	EXPLAINING OUTCOME 2	63
5.3.1	<i>Intermediate outcome 2.1a</i>	64
5.3.2	<i>Alternative hypothesis (null) 2.1b</i>	64
5.3.3	<i>Intermediate outcome 2.2a</i>	64
5.3.4	<i>Alternative hypothesis (null) 2.2b</i>	65
5.3.5	<i>Intermediate outcome 2.3b</i>	65
5.3.6	<i>Intermediate outcome 2.3c</i>	65
5.3.7	<i>Alternative hypothesis (null) 2.3d</i>	66
5.3.8	<i>Final outcome 2.4a</i>	66
5.3.9	<i>Final outcome 2.4b</i>	66
5.3.10	<i>Conclusion</i>	66
6	EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS	67
7	LESSONS LEARNED	68
8	RECOMMENDATIONS	69
	Bibliography	72
	ANNEXES	74
	Annex 1. Terms of Reference	75
	Annex 2. Evaluation matrix	80
	Annex 3. List of interviewees	85
	Annex 4. List of site visits	87
	Annex 5. Data collection instruments	88
1.	IDI Interview Guide – MAG Mentors / Life Skills Trainers	88
2.	IDI Interview Guide – MAG Members	93
3.	IDI Interview Guide – MAG Member Parents	99
4.	IDI Interview Guide – Community & Religious Leaders	103
5.	IDI Interview Guide – ALC teachers	108
6.	KII Interview Guide – Local Implementers	112
7.	KII Interview Guide – National Stakeholders	113
	Annex 6. List of documentary evidence	114
	Annex 7. Research ethics approval	115

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: UNICEF (2020). Country Level Programme: Afghanistan	3
Figure 2: Stakeholder Map	4
Figure 3: Theory of Change.....	10
Figure 4: The structure of MAGs (Source: C4ED elaboration in midline report)	20
Figure 5: Theory of Change (source: Midline Evaluation, 2020)	57
Figure 6: Causal chain – Outcome 1	60
Figure 7: Causal chain – Outcome 2.....	63

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 List of villages selected for data collection in each province	12
Table 2 Total interviews conducted by category of respondents.....	12
Table 3 List of recommendations	71

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACO	Afghanistan Country Office
AEPO	Afghanistan Education Production Organization
ALC/P	Accelerated Learning Centre/Programmes
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
C4ED	Center for Evaluation and Development
CD	Community Discussions
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CL	Community Leaders
CPO	Causal-Process Observation
CSO	Central Statistical Organisation of Afghanistan
GEEW	Gender equality and the empowerment of women
HTP	Harmful traditional practice
IALA	Improving Adolescent Lives in Afghanistan
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IF	IKEA Foundation
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KII	Key-Informant Interview
LST	Life-Skill Training
MAGs	Multipurpose Adolescent Groups
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHRA	Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs
MoIC	Ministry of Information and Culture
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NHNL	New Homes New Lives
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
OOS	Out-of-School
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him
PT	Process Tracing
RL	Religious Leader
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WVA	World Vision Afghanistan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of the intervention

The IALA programme was set up in 2017 and run until 2020 with funding from the IKEA Foundation (IF) as a multi-year, multi-country intervention covering three countries – Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan – to improve the lives of adolescents by increasing their influence over decisions affecting their lives. The programme sought to empower adolescents and young adults aged between 10 and 19 years, by enhancing their knowledge, improving their access to information, and supporting their rights to healthier and safer lifestyles. Besides adolescents, IALA also had interventions directed towards parents of adolescents as well as community and religious leaders, who were all identified as crucial change agents in creating a suitable environment for engendering the new practices imparted to adolescents. In Afghanistan, the programme was implemented in all eight districts of the Bamyan province and in three out of the seven districts of the Badghis province.

The overall objective of the IALA programme was to reduce the harmful traditional practices that adolescents in Afghanistan are exposed to and empower them as agents of change with the knowledge and confidence to reduce their exposure to these. IALA had three main goals: 1) reducing child marriage, 2) lowering the incidence of teenage pregnancy, and 3) enhancing female educational outcomes in the form of increased secondary school (re)enrolment. The programme also encouraged a healthy and creative lifestyle by imparting important life skills to adolescents and creating a space for them to discuss the topics they consider important for their wellbeing and overall empowerment. These discussions were facilitated by the creation of the Multipurpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs), that provided a safe space for adolescents to communicate the barriers and issues afflicting their ability to participate in making choices that affect their lives. The programme set two outcomes¹: 1) that by the end of the programme, adolescents from two target provinces are able to communicate with each other and policy makers to share information among peers through various avenues (such as social media forums, mobile technologies) and traditional methods of communication at the local levels, and at least 52,334 (50% female and 50% male) adolescents are mobilized as agents of change for themselves and their communities through engaging in adolescent groups/Shuras; 2) that by the end of the programme, 60,651 religious leaders, elders, parents, and influential individuals from communities in the 11 districts of the 2 target provinces support adolescents, especially girls, to access services, participate in decision making, and prevent their exposure to harmful traditional practices leading to abuse and exploitation.

Objectives and intended audience

This report focuses on examining the theoretical causal chain of the IALA programme and on assessing the programme's performance based on the key criteria of relevance, fidelity, coverage, effectiveness, and sustainability. The report identifies which aspects of the programme worked well, and outlines good practices, lessons learned, and recommendations - with the objective of providing evidence of what works and shedding light on what is required to remove barriers and promote enablers for the successful delivery of similar programmes for the target groups. Based on the key mechanisms and findings outlined in the report, it is possible to adjust assumptions and expectations and to reassign levels of effort to activities and outputs.

Since IALA involves many actors, there is a varied audience that can benefit from this report. At the programme end, Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan (AKFA) and World Vision Afghanistan (WVA) will benefit from the insights provided regarding programme implementation, while UNICEF can benefit from insights regarding programme design. The report can further inform other institutional and international actors working on child protection and child rights in Afghanistan and the broader South Asia region, by providing insights and offering operational recommendations for future programming. The report can inform them about the assumptions and steppingstones that might be similar or require context-specific adaptations, and thereby ensure the design or implementation of programmes can be successful for the intended objectives.

Evaluation methodology

This summative evaluation of IALA was conducted using a purely qualitative approach. Prior to this, a baseline study was carried out in 2017, and a follow up midline quantitative impact study was conducted in 2019. The data collection for IALA Afghanistan's endline was originally envisaged to be undertaken on a much larger scale, to answer all research questions relevant for the evaluation. The plan was to increase the sample size by interviewing respondents from additional villages in Bamyan and Badghis (using recall data to perform matching) and by extending the analysis to Herat and Daikundi, both provinces that were not included in the midline evaluation (but for which we had baseline data). However, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the active conflict in the country between the Taliban and the government forces at the time of the evaluation design, the possibility of an extended data collection became untenable, and it was hence decided that the summative evaluation would rely only on a qualitative component to address the gaps that midline data were unable to address.

¹ IALA Final Report, UNICEF (2020), p.2

For the current study, semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) with a purposive sample of beneficiaries, community members, teachers, and trainers were supplemented by key informant interviews (KIIs) with relevant staff and officials. To explore the programme in-depth, insights from both implementing partners (Agha Khan Foundation, World Vision) and participants were gathered. For programme implementing partners, KIIs and for beneficiaries IDIs were conducted in both treatment provinces (Bamyan & Badghis). KIIs helped to gather information and critical perceptions on programme design and implementation, while the IDIs identified success stories, changes, challenges, and perceptions about the programme.

The findings from the qualitative data were analysed using Process Tracing (PT) to understand whether the results of the IALA programme are consistent with its Theory of Change and to see if alternative explanations can be ruled out. PT is a case-based approach to Causal-Process Observations (CPOs) which enables the examination of specific cases in greater detail. For this evaluation, a combination of theory-testing PT and explaining-outcome PT approaches were employed. Theory-testing PT was used to test the validity and assumptions of the Theory of Change developed in the midline evaluation. Explaining-outcome PT helped to obtain a good understanding of how the causal mechanisms worked, by breaking down the outcomes into a series of intermediate outcomes and testing the intervening steps against competing hypotheses, based on the evidence gathered. The PT method helped the C4ED team determine whether the apparently interlocking components of the IALA programme were effectively united in a process to produce the final desired outcomes, namely the increased educational, health and social empowerment of adolescents in the selected Afghani provinces of Badghis and Bamyan.

Key findings

The IALA programme adopted a holistic approach, which was found to have overall engaged the right participants for adolescent empowerment. The programme adopted a unique content and design by placing adolescents at the centre of the intervention, while also engaging relevant groups of adults in their target areas (parents, community and religious leaders). The programme's contents were found to be relevant to the target groups, both for adolescents' contexts and learning needs as well as for parents and leaders. The practical learning style was considered engaging and useful to both adolescents and communities.

IALA's implementation faced some challenges in delivering its activities and outputs, with the biggest one being the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted most programme activities in the last quarter. Various other challenges emanated both from both the contexts in which the activities were carried out and from design and operational aspects of the programme. These challenges had tangible effects on implementation and acted as barriers to the target groups' full utilization of the programme. One set of challenges was connected to communities' traditional social and gender norms and the characteristics of their contexts and practices, which presented difficulties for engaging adolescents and community members and for sharing the messages from the programme. Such challenges included: some communities' resistance to changing views and behaviours towards adolescents' rights, particularly at the beginning of the intervention and in more remote and/or rural areas; the need to adapt to a gender segregated MAG structure in some areas due to socio-cultural traditions; a high proportion of illiteracy, which called for changes in training design and introduced difficulties to MAG operations; and communities' livelihood conditions, which included child labour, affecting the attendance and participation particularly of vulnerable adolescents. The challenges connected to the programme's design and operations included: a limited and insufficiently systematic engagement of parents and leaders in MAG activities; a potentially insufficient adaptation to some local conditions, including seasonal activities, and the needs of the vulnerable adolescents in the MAG structure and mentoring; a limited budget for community activities and lacking budget for MAG premises; and some delays incurred in the implementation of community-level activities (development of action plans in Badghis).

Regarding Outcome 1 of IALA², the findings show that adolescents acquired relevant knowledge regarding their rights and life skills applicable to their lives, and that they were able to communicate with their peers, at most times with their families and sometimes with community and religious leaders, although communication with policy makers could not be established. Adolescents acted as agents of change for peers and families in their communities, campaigning outside the MAGs to promote access to education and the prevention of child marriages. They did this via different means, including peer to peer mentoring, reaching out to the families in their communities, and sometimes talking to community or religious leaders to help them solve problems. They also carried out various awareness raising campaigns and other social actions. There is also evidence that the most effective communication occurred not through the use of technological aids or radio but rather through activities such as peer-to-peer outreach, door to door and artistic activities.

² By end of the programme, adolescents from two target provinces are able to communicate with each other and policy makers through various avenues (such as social media forums, mobile technologies) to share information among peers and traditional methods of communication at the local levels, and at least 52,334 (50% female and 50% male) adolescents are mobilized as agents of change for themselves and their communities through engaging in adolescent groups/Shuras.

Regarding Outcome 2³, though sensitisation of religious leaders (RL), community leaders (CL), parents, and communities at large took place, there is considerable unevenness in the extent to which the adults in the communities were reached, and how this translated into their engagement in actions of child protection in line with Outcome 2. As IALA used Islamic teachings to centre its messaging on child rights to a large extent, it could circumvent societal resistance. Communities were to a large extent appreciative of the teachings received on children's rights, a knowledge that they reported to not have had before. However, it is evident that messages were interpreted differently by each category of respondents, and that there were different levels of commitment to each set of messages. There is almost universal appreciation of the importance of education for the future of children, though most stakeholders acknowledged that economic realities affect a person's access to education. This is especially important, as adults' support for adolescent education is for both boys and girls, but girls are much more affected by societal norms on education. Child marriage is a topic which shows more variation in the levels of acceptance by distinct stakeholder groups. There is evidence that some RLs have the view that marriages should only happen after puberty. However, most RLs considered marriages to be *advisable* above the age of 18, even though they should be *permissible* earlier. Parents tend to have the view that adolescents should only get married after the legal age, though child marriages occurred or where in some cases prevented by individuals taking part in the programme. There is some evidence that spaces have opened up for adolescents, and that they are included in decision-making; however, parents continue to be the ones taking the final decisions. Early pregnancy was not found to be very salient among respondents. Those who mentioned it, typically referred to it as one among the many problems caused by child marriage, which reflects the inextricable links between the social norms of pregnancy and marriage.

Key conclusions

The findings suggest that the IALA programme has raised awareness of the importance of the rights and protection of adolescents in the target areas of Afghanistan, both within target communities and among government counterparts. IALA put adolescents at the centre of the intervention and promoted their empowerment not only through raising awareness of their rights but also through providing relevant and applicable skills that adolescents could relate to and incorporate to improve their circumstances and contexts. Moreover, IALA brought about a practical approach to teaching and learning which was instructional in terms of teaching contents and teaching practices; adolescents' learning experience was boosted first-hand by giving them a key role in the MAG structure and organisation and by becoming peer educators from the get-go. MAG's practical approach, which was different from school, was considered complementary, useful, highly valued, and something that adolescents had not seen before. Thus, IALA's teaching contents and styles were both new and relevant to their target population.

Even though IALA's activities seem to have raised the awareness of communities about children's rights, especially considering that these were mostly new topics for the community members, not all have embraced these ideas. With the sudden and still ongoing political transition since the take-over of political power by the Taliban in August 2021, many of these gains are threatened. For example, there are indications that despite the greater awareness of the importance of education within the population, access to education has become impossible or much more challenging with the closure of schools and the increased exclusion of girls from schools. Moreover, an increase in child marriages of girls was identified as a potential danger under the new Taliban administration.

Key recommendations

- Consider the target groups' economic realities in programme design.
- Explore potential linkages with government actors and the private sector for supporting options of setting up more higher learning courses, TVET classes, or alternative approaches, such as livelihood training accessible for girls, to address barriers to female empowerment
- Strengthen trainers' preparation for teaching illiterate children and mixed groups, including disabled children.
- Ensure systematic engagement of key adults, particularly parents, through targeted activities/educational programmes.
- Plan for enhancements to training and cascade learning through longer-term, spaced out, and varied incorporation of contents and inclusion of adolescents in design, to boost their engagement.
- Establish closer programme monitoring by UNICEF with centralised oversight of monitoring data.
- Reconsider the channels used for messaging.
- Provide a specific budget for MAG premises and plan for an increase of budgeting for community activities.
- Plan for programme continuation and expansion to neighbouring villages.

³ By end of the programme, 60,651 religious leaders, elders, parents, and influential individuals from the community in the 11 districts of the 2 target provinces support adolescents, especially girls, to access services, participate in decision making, and prevent their exposure to harmful traditional practices leading to abuse and exploitation.

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 COUNTRY CONTEXT

Afghanistan is a mountainous and landlocked country of about 39 million inhabitants (2020), most of whom live in tribal and kinship communities in rural areas (World Population Review, 2022). The country's decades-long armed conflicts coupled with deeply ingrained harmful traditional practices, such as child marriage, has had severe emotional and health consequences for women and children (Li et al., 2018).

As of 2021, Afghanistan entered the early dividend stage of the demographic transition with a steady decrease in birth rates and an increase in the working age population, resulting in an economic window of opportunity. To seize this opportunity, it is crucial that Afghanistan makes the necessary investments to anticipate the 'adolescent bulge' entering the labour market in the coming years. Adolescents currently constitute 26% of the population (UNICEF ROSA, 2019). However, the country's growing adolescent population is prone to many risks, as they have suffered from years of violence, abuse, and harmful traditional practices that affect their lives. To take the example of exclusion from education, factors such as being female, social norms, and child marriage, as well as traditional and religious beliefs are responsible for keeping adolescents – especially girls – out of school. Evidently, exclusion from education has profound impacts on adolescents and, when coupled with pre-existing socioeconomic challenges, gives rise to child labour and early marriage (UNICEF, 2021). The situation for this vulnerable segment of the population is further exacerbated by both the Covid-19 pandemic and the recent regime change in Afghanistan (UNICEF, 2022).

Although marrying off children under the age of 15 is illegal in Afghanistan, it is a common practice, particularly in rural areas. For the period 2005-2019, the rate of child marriage by the age of 18 was at 28%⁴. Poverty, strong patriarchal values, and poor access to education all drive child marriage in Afghanistan. According to UNICEF data for 2017, the adolescent birth rate was 62 per 1000 girls aged 15-19, which can be seen as a consequence of early child marriage and of lacking or limited access to reproductive health services⁵. Child marriages usually serve to strengthen ties with rival families and ethnic groups, as part of deals, or to settle debts and disputes. Poor families often end up selling daughters for large dowries from wealthy people, and the husbands are usually much older. The decisions to sell off girls for marriage are made by men, while wives, mothers, sisters and the girls themselves have little or no say. Furthermore, a quarter of women suffering from obstetric fistula, which can condemn women to ill-health and ostracism, were below the age of 16 when they married (UNFPA Afghanistan, 2021).

As of August 2021, Taliban assumed national political power in Afghanistan, and the new political developments have pushed the country into economic crisis with immediate repercussions across an economy already facing daunting development challenges (World Bank, 2021). Leadership transitions and implications for basic services and financial systems have brought further turmoil to a country that has experienced four decades of prolonged conflict, recurrent natural disasters, chronic poverty, and disease outbreaks, including COVID-19 (UNICEF, 2022). It is estimated that about 24 million people – of which about 12 million are children – are in need for humanitarian assistance (ibid.). Moreover, the recent political transition has consequences for vulnerable populations in the country, especially women and children, with UNICEF (2021) reporting a rise in child marriage due to the political and economic situation.

The IALA programme was developed to be implemented in two provinces of Afghanistan: Bamyan and Badghis. Bamyan is in the centre of Afghanistan, with a population of 368,395 people, 190,310 of which are males and 178,085 of which are females (2011). During the same period, half the population was 16 years old or younger. Bamyan scored higher than the national average on literacy rates (38.1%) in the population aged 10 years and above, with the male and female literacy rates being 50% and 25%, respectively. Around 5% of the population of Bamyan aged 5 years or older suffered from at least one functional difficulty (Bamyan Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey, 2011). In 2018, the rate of child marriage in Bamyan rested at 31% (UNICEF, 2018).

Badghis is located in the western part of Afghanistan, bordering Faryab, Ghor, and Herat provinces, and Turkmenistan, with a population of 499,393 people, 254,854 of which are males and 244,539 are females. Only around 3% of the provincial population is urban, while 97% live in rural areas. Badghis has a literacy rate of only 11%, with the male and female literacy rates being 14% and 7%, respectively (Provincial Development Plan: Badghis Provincial Profile, 2010). Notably, Badghis is among the provinces with the highest rate (55%) of child marriage (UNICEF, 2018).

Afghanistan ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1994 and is committed to protecting the right to life and education of every child. Respecting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is enshrined in its Constitution. Furthermore, Article 43 sets forth the right of all citizens to a free education up to the B.A. level (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 1/26/2004). Since 2001, education has been a priority area of action for the government and is managed by the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), and religious

4 <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard>

5 <https://data.unicef.org/resources/adolescent-health-dashboards-country-profiles/>

organisations. In 2005, strengthening early childhood care, providing children with a free and compulsory primary education, achieving gender parity and equality, and improving the quality of education were on the political agenda as part of the Education for All agreement (MoE, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, UNICEF, USAID and Samuel Hall 2018). This measure was completed by the first National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) in 2006 and the Education law in 2008 in order to improve access and quality education, and to turn education into a driver of the economic and social recovery of the country (MoE, UNICEF, USAID and Samuel Hall 2018). As part of the third NESP (2017-2021), the MoE outlined a new working framework with civil society, the private sector, and NGOs, recognising the vital role played by parents and communities in the promotion of education. In addition to the public-school system, the MoE is also working with partners on alternative school modalities to address gaps in education. Policy guidelines for Community-Based Education (CBE) were developed in 2008 and updated in 2012 and 2018 to facilitate the cooperation between both formal and informal systems (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education 2018). This strategy falls in line with the government's goal to provide each Afghan child with a holistic and inclusive education, and to bring out-of-school children (back) to school.

The IALA programme was closely related to and contributed to these efforts. It directly addressed a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (see Section 1.2). With an SDG Index Score of 53.9, Afghanistan is ranked 137 out of 165 countries (Sachs et al. 2021). Afghanistan integrated the SDGs into its national development plan (ANPDF I+II) and made slight progress, for example with regard to SDG 4 (education). Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic, and in particular the political transition to the Taliban administration in 2021 represent a massive setback, the precise effects of which remain to be seen.

1.2 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

The IALA programme was set up in 2017 and run until 2020 with funding from the IKEA Foundation (IF) as a multi-year, multi-country intervention covering three countries - Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan - to improve the lives of adolescents by increasing their influence over decisions affecting their lives. The programme sought to empower adolescents and young adults aged between 10 and 19 years, by enhancing their knowledge, improving their access to information, and supporting their rights to healthier and safer lifestyles. Besides adolescents, IALA also had interventions directed towards parents of adolescents as well as community and religious leaders, who were all identified as crucial change agents in creating a suitable environment for engendering the new practices imparted to adolescents.

In Afghanistan, the programme was implemented in all eight districts of the Bamyan province and in three out of the seven districts of the Badghis province. The majority of the programme-supported communities are rural and remote, where adolescents often drop out of school or do not enrol due to local traditions and attitudes towards education, especially towards adolescent girls, and due to the distances from educational infrastructures, resulting in high illiteracy rates and early marriage⁶.

The overall objective of the IALA programme was to reduce the harmful traditional practices that adolescents in Afghanistan are exposed to and empower them as agents of change with the knowledge and confidence to reduce their exposure to these. IALA had three main goals: 1) reducing child marriage, 2) lowering the incidence of teenage pregnancy, and 3) enhancing female educational outcomes in the form of increased secondary school (re)enrolment. The programme also encouraged a healthy and creative lifestyle by imparting important life skills to adolescents and creating a space for them to discuss the topics they consider important for their wellbeing and overall empowerment.

In alignment with the programme's theory of change, the programme engaged three "pillars," each of which had a role in increasing the self-efficacy of adolescents, especially girls:

- I. Adolescents, organized into groups as change agents; knowledgeable about their rights and entitlements; participating in forums and discussions;
- II. Families, communities and decision makers as knowledgeable protectors of adolescents from rights abuses; and
- III. Public authorities equipped with skills and able to provide services, as upholders of adolescents' rights.

⁶ IALA Final Progress Report 2020

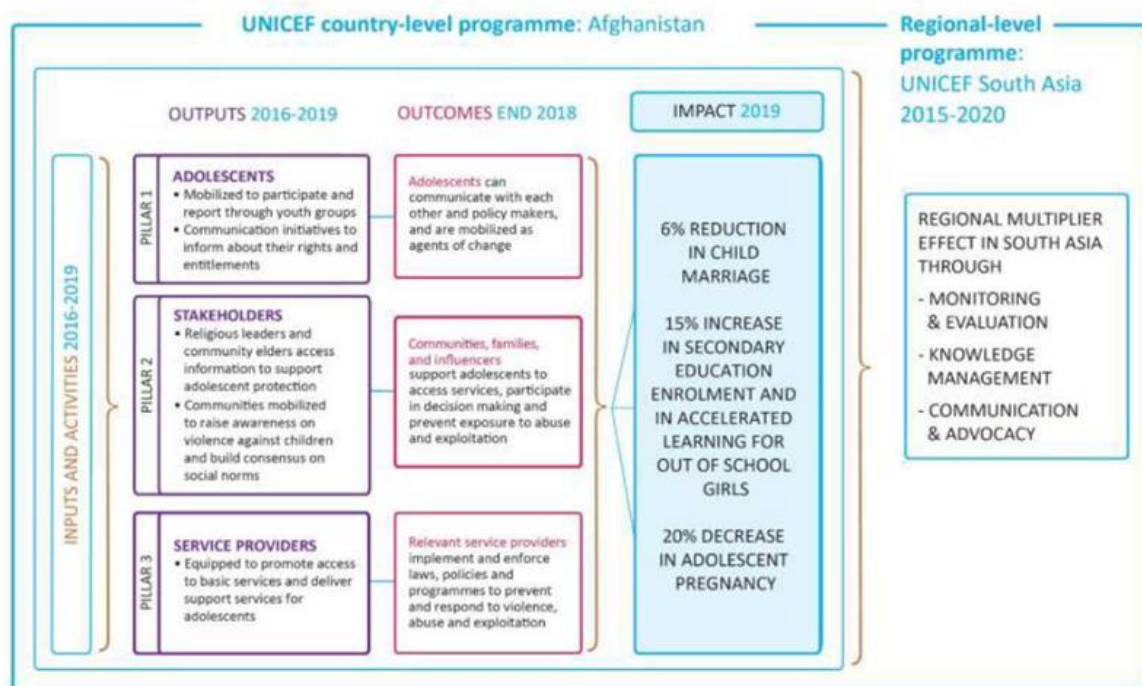


Figure 1: IALA Country Level Programme, Afghanistan (UNICEF, 2020)

The IALA programme set out two outcomes⁷:

- **Outcome 1:** By end of the programme, adolescents from two target provinces are able to communicate with each other and policy makers through various avenues (such as social media forums, mobile technologies) to share information among peers and traditional methods of communication at the local levels and at least 52,334 (50% female and 50% male) adolescents are mobilized as agents of change for themselves and their communities through engaging in adolescent groups/Shuras.
- **Outcome 2:** By end of the programme, 60,651 religious leaders, elders, parents, and influential individuals from the community in the 11 districts of the 2 target provinces support adolescents, especially girls, to access services, participate in decision making, and prevent their exposure to harmful traditional practices leading to abuse and exploitation.

In order to achieve these outcomes, the key programme interventions developed by IALA were:

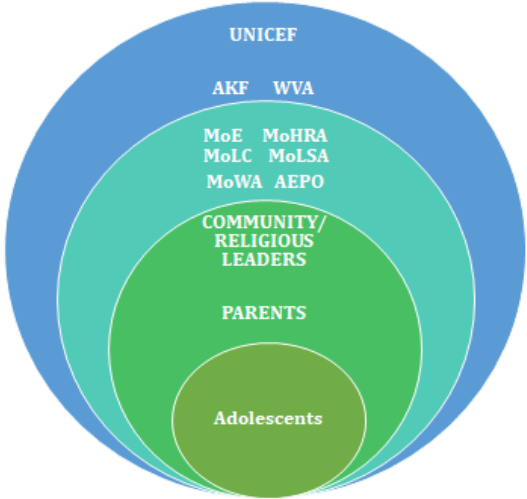
1. Providing life skills training and information about rights & entitlements via radio programmes to adolescents organised through their in-person participation in *Multi-purpose Adolescent Groups* (MAGs) and via radio programmes.
2. Conducting community trainings with influential community members such as community leaders, religious leaders, parents of adolescents on topics related to child rights, gender equality, adolescent empowerment, protection from violence including preventing early marriage and promoting girls' education.
3. Working with governmental/non-governmental entities to enhance the quality of service provision for hard-to-reach adolescents and improve educational outcomes via accelerated learning modalities.

IALA directly targets, through the interventions, three key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through the Multi-purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs) and its umbrella of activities, it sought to promote health and well-being (SDG 3) by addressing issues of reproductive health and harmful traditional practices (HTPs). Through the MAGs and community-level activities encouraging school enrolment and contributing to literacy, and the support of Accelerated Learning Centres (ALCs), the programme contributed to ensuring equitable access to education and promoting learning opportunities (SDG 4). The programme also aimed to directly promote gender equality (SDG 5) by adopting a gender approach throughout programme design and implementation – targeting girls' participation and addressing key impediments to girls' equality - especially with regards to child marriage, early pregnancy, and access to education. The programme also indirectly targeted poverty reduction (SDG 1) through providing education opportunities and advocating against illiteracy as avenues of potential in reducing social and economic inequalities (SDG 10).

⁷ IALA Final Report, UNICEF (2020), p.2

For the implementation of IALA, UNICEF ACO engaged with the Consortium Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and World Vision Association (WVA) as implementing partners, as well as with the following governmental entities: the MoE, the Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs (MoHRA), the MoIC, the MoLSA, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), and the Afghanistan Education Production Organisation (AEPO), with financial support from the IKEA Foundation. The total programme budget amounted to 759,150 USD, with 642,000 USD contributed by UNICEF⁸.

Figure 2: Stakeholder Map



Adolescents aged between 10 and 19 years were the main target group and beneficiaries of the intervention. A total of 176 MAGs were established through the IALA programme, 144 in Bamyán and 32 in Badghis. A total of 3,665 adolescents (1,702 male and 1,963 female) joined the MAGs, with 66% in-school (including ALC) and 34% out-of-school children (IALA Final Report, UNICEF 2021b).

The intervention also targeted **parents, community and religious leaders** as key influencers to foster an enabling environment for the adolescents. It engaged 35,970 influential community leaders, comprising community elders, Community Development Council (CDCs) members, and Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) members, through training and mentoring on child rights, gender, and the importance of girls’ education; carried out follow-up monitoring of 166 religious leaders trained on child rights in Islam by UNICEF and the Department of Haj and

Religious Affairs (DoHRA); and conducted 176 community discussions with parents, families, and other community members to raise awareness on harmful traditional practices, with the development of 176 action plans to prevent and address them at community level.

Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and **World Vision Afghanistan (WVA)** were UNICEF’s implementing partners in Bamyán and Badghis respectively. AKF led the development of the programme’s life-skills training package in coordination with WVA and delivered the Training of Trainers for both districts, while WVA led the development of the Community Discussions training package that was tested during the first Training of Trainers conducted by WVA.

The **Afghanistan Education Production Organisation (AEPO)** supported IALA activities through several interventions in Bamyán and Badghis. AEPO produced a total of 890 (445 Dari / 445 Pashto) radio scenes of the New Home New Life drama and broadcasted a variety of storylines; produced and broadcasted a total of 26 (13 Dari / 13 Pashto) radio educational feature programmes nationwide (including in Bamyán and Badghis); was in charge of publications of the New Home New Life Magazine and AEPO Wall Calendars with education messages; developed the training package for self-expression through short story development and writing for adolescents and conducted Training of Trainers; carried out training of adolescents on how to participate in radio debates; and arranged live radio debates.

UNICEF and the **MoHRA** conducted the training on Child Rights in Islam with Mullahs (religious leaders) in the two IALA provinces, while the **MoE** was in charge of Accelerated Learning Centres (ALCs), for which UNICEF provided technical and financial support. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MWA) and the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) were also involved, as they launched a National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Marriage together with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Afghanistan in 2018, which aimed at improving the implementation of supportive laws and services (MoLSA and UNICEF 2018).

1.3 EVALUATION BACKGROUND

The present evaluation constitutes the qualitative summative evaluation of the IALA programme implemented in Afghanistan. It seeks to build on and provide a more nuanced perspective to the quantitative results of the midline evaluation conducted in 2019, thus enabling the assessment of the intervention as a whole.

The evaluation used a **qualitative approach** which focused on understanding the underlying mechanisms that have led to the results of the quantitative midline evaluation and to assess the programme’s performance based on the key criteria of relevance, fidelity, coverage, effectiveness, and sustainability. The focus has been on understanding the mechanisms that led to results, identifying key barriers and impediments, and outlining lessons

⁸ Another 117,150 USD were contributed by the Central Statistical Organisation of Afghanistan (CSO). The numbers stem from the IALA programme document, Annex C of Programme Cooperation Agreement between C4ED and UNICEF from the year 2017.

learned and best practices for the achievement of outcomes. The evaluation also offers insights for cross-country comparison and learning for the summative evaluation of the three-country intervention.

The qualitative summative evaluation was conducted by C4ED between October 2021 and January 2022. 90 individual data collection sessions were carried out in 10 villages of the target provinces (five in Bamyan and Badghis, respectively). The sessions consisted of in-depth interviews (IDIs) with direct beneficiaries, teachers, and trainers, and key informant interviews (KIIs) with core NGO and UNICEF staff. The fieldwork was conducted through C4ED's local partner, Almansoor Solutions Ltd., and took place between December 2021 and January 2022.

The evaluation took place during a particularly challenging and insecure period for Afghanistan, following the Taliban regime takeover in August 2021. It was marked by high unpredictability of the processes surrounding the transition, newly imposed guidelines and restrictions across the country (e.g., school closures, stay-at-home orders for women), and a deteriorating economic situation, derived from both the internal instability and external economic pressures. There were high levels of violence reported in parts of the country, internal displacement, and migration of Afghans to neighbouring countries. These circumstances deeply affected programme participants in the target provinces and required replanning of the evaluation exercise on several occasions.

The evaluation team discussed the design, methodology, and data collection strategies with UNICEF, ACO, and ROSA staff to ensure that requirements were met from a methodological perspective and kept them informed about emerging data challenges that needed to be circumvented. UNICEF regional offices and the implementing NGOs AKF and WVA were involved in consultations regarding fieldwork possibilities and the gathering of contextual information, stakeholder engagement, and the types of respondents to be selected for interviews. They also had a consultative role in refining the selection of villages from the list provided by the evaluation team based on the midline evaluation. UNICEF regional offices, AKF, and WVA were also involved in field facilitation of the evaluation team, the provision of monitoring data, and support in replacing respondents when these were unavailable or unwilling to take part. Governmental partners were not included in the evaluation as a result of the conflict-situation and the institutional uncertainty at the time of the study. Unclear links between UNICEF and governmental offices due to the circumstances surrounding the political transition during this period was an element of further uncertainty for the team's mobilisation in the field. This was partially mitigated by the availability of the regional UNICEF offices' staff and the implementing NGOs' teams, offering support to the evaluation team during fieldwork, as well as by our local partner's knowledge and understanding of the areas where data collection took place.

As a result of the complexity and uncertainty of the context, the evaluation underwent several design and data collection changes and adjustments in consultation with UNICEF and the implementing partners AKF and WVA to ensure that fieldwork could proceed without placing risks on neither respondents nor the evaluation team. One of these adjustments was the elimination of any form of group data collection session (focus group discussions), to increase respondents' privacy and safety. Furthermore, locations were selected by finding a balance between heterogeneity, accessibility, and security of access.

The identification of participants for interviews was also a highly complex task in this context, requiring the adjustment of strategies. The displacement of programme participants particularly in Bamyan, the lack of connectivity in some target areas, and the refusal of some participants to take part in the evaluation due to the context of insecurity meant that the team had to find replacements for several respondents in different categories, in coordination with the implementing partners. This resulted in a more complex and longer fieldwork than foreseen. An additional difficulty was the evaluation team's lack of access to systematic monitoring data on the interventions per each selected village.

In consideration of all the above-mentioned circumstances, methodological and data collection compromises had to be made with regard to locations, methods, and modalities of access to respondents to ensure that fieldwork could be completed with minimal setbacks. Despite this, the evaluation team managed to complete the 90 interview sessions foreseen in the revised plan and to incorporate the perspectives of a wide variety of stakeholders who took part in the programme, including direct beneficiaries (adolescents, parents, community, and religious leaders), trainers, teachers, and core staff from the implementing partners.

Implementing partners were consulted on rights holders prior to the evaluation launch to ensure that the approach taken would account for their needs, rights, and challenging contexts. Rights holders were directly involved, firstly in the piloting exercise of the evaluation, which was conducted to ensure that the tools designed were relevant and appropriate from a rights-based approach, methodologically sound, and catered to the target groups and their contexts. Secondly, rights holders were involved as key participants in the data collection exercise, which sought to engage and involve them to effectively capture and understand their perspectives and viewpoints. This was done by way of in-depth interviews with open-ended questions and semi-structured guides which allowed for exploring emerging topics as well as themes of interest and relevance to interviewees. It should be noted that the evaluation had a primary concern in ensuring that the various perspectives of rights holders (as well as of duty bearers) would be contemplated in data collection and analysis, which is why the evaluation included a wide range of stakeholders to be interviewed. These perspectives were incorporated into the qualitative content analysis, together with concerns, best practices, and recommendations offered by both rights holders and duty bearers. Participants more directly involved in programme implementation (adolescents, mentors, and

programme staff) were also the ones who more actively offered their knowledge on lessons learned and perspectives on how to make things better in the future in accordance with their needs and contexts.

2 EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, AND SCOPE

2.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE

The main purpose of the summative evaluation was to gather evidence that will inform, firstly, the UNICEF country office and the implementing partners AKF and WVA on the programme results. The report identifies which aspects of the programme worked well and outlines good practices, lessons learnt, and recommendations, with the objective of providing evidence of what works and shedding light on what is required to remove barriers and promote enablers for the successful delivery of similar programmes for the target groups. Based on the key mechanisms and findings outlined in the report, it is possible to adjust assumptions and expectations and to reassign the levels of effort to activities and outputs.

Furthermore, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation will be used to improve programming for adolescents and scale up similar programmes in other provinces, if possible. They will also feed into efforts at the level of the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) to compile lessons learnt across the three countries that are part of the broader multi-country initiative.

By providing evidence of what works and offering operational recommendations for future programming, the report can further inform other governmental and non-governmental organisations in Afghanistan working in the fields of education, child protection, and children's rights, as well as international actors active in these fields in the country and the broader South Asia region. The report can help inform the reader about the assumptions and steppingstones that might be similar or require context-specific adaptations and thereby ensure the design or implementation of programmes can be successful for the intended objectives.

The summative evaluation's goal was to understand the underlying mechanisms that led to the results of the quantitative midline evaluation and to assess the programme's performance based on the key criteria of relevance, fidelity, coverage, effectiveness, and sustainability. The evaluation used a qualitative approach, which was underpinned by, and extended, the overarching Theory of Change (hereinafter ToC) for the IALA programme elaborated in the midline evaluation report. The focus was placed on understanding the mechanisms that led to results, identifying key barriers and impediments, and outlining lessons learnt, successes, and best practices for the achievement of outcomes and for future programming.

The evaluation results are expected to contribute to the strengthening of child protection and child rights' programming in Afghanistan by providing evidence of what works and recommendations on what can be improved to enhance the target group's knowledge and access to information and to support their rights to healthier and safer lifestyles. The study recognizes children's agency, resilience, and capacities in determining what decisions will meet their best interests, whilst contributing to an evidence base to support the work of institutional and international actors in the field.

2.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The following core objectives guided this evaluation of IALA:

- Assess the suitability of the programme approach to the local context and in meeting the priority needs of adolescents in the programme areas (**relevance**).
- Assess the adherence of programme implementation to design and identify the underlying reasons for any divergence in implementation across programme sites (**fidelity/coherence**).
- Measure availability, accessibility, and uptake of programme interventions by intended beneficiaries and clarify any differences across key beneficiary groups (**coverage**).
- Identify and document successes, challenges, and gaps in the IALA programme in Afghanistan and provide recommendations to guide better design and implementation of similar interventions in the future (**effectiveness**).
- Identify which programme interventions have taken root and continued to proliferate in beneficiary communities after the end of the programme's lifespan if any, and why communities have continued their engagement in these interventions but not others (**sustainability**).

Relevance: The study focuses on the analysis on how the programme was designed and to what extent the needs of the target groups were met, and how the specificity of their contexts was understood and addressed.

Fidelity/Coherence: The study analyses the extent to which the programme was implemented as designed and explores the reasons for divergencies.

Effectiveness: The study identifies what worked and what did not work in the interventions delivered and what factors explain differences in the effectiveness of programme interventions, capturing best practices and lessons learnt in the process, and exploring the mechanisms through which results were produced.

Coverage: The dimension of coverage in this qualitative study focuses on how target groups were identified and engaged, to what extent the programme's interventions were rendered accessible and available to them, and how the uptake of interventions was perceived by the target groups and other key stakeholders. It does not seek to provide answers on overall programme coverage in terms of statistically valid representativeness.

Sustainability: The study seeks to explore if programme initiatives have persisted through time and after the programme's end, if observed changes in the target groups and at community levels have been maintained or discontinued, and what overall lasting impacts the programme has had on the target groups.

The summative evaluation focused on providing a nuanced understanding of the results of the midline evaluation and on examining the Theory of Change (ToC) in connection with IALA's two outcomes, linked to Pillars I (adolescents) and II (stakeholders) of the programme results' framework. Pillar III (service providers) was not a focus of the evaluation. The scope of the evaluation agreed upon by the C4ED and UNICEF allowed for an analysis of two main aspects:

- I. Stakeholders' views of the IALA programme's implementation, and
- II. IALA's contribution to enhance adolescents' empowerment.

Aiming to document and analyse the IALA programme in a comprehensive way, the evaluation covered a breadth of aspects, from programme design and implementation processes and their suitability to local contexts, to achievements, challenges, and varying perceptions about the intervention. It focused on three key aspects (programme implementation, adolescent empowerment, and programme theory validation) across five key evaluation criteria: relevance, fidelity/coherence, coverage, effectiveness, and sustainability (see Annex 2).

Questions about programme implementation covered issues such as the adaptation of MAGs to the local context and adolescents' priorities; challenges to implementation as it was planned; delays, uniformity, and divergence that occurred during implementation; success of beneficiaries' mobilisation strategies; effectiveness of partnerships with stakeholders; and successes and challenges of the programme's sustainability components.

With regard to programme outcomes, and particularly IALA's contribution to adolescent empowerment, the evaluation collected data from all involved stakeholders, with an emphasis on incorporating youths' perspectives and providing an account of their perceptions of change. Some of the aspects that the evaluation team aimed to expand understanding on were: adolescents' experience with and learning outcomes from the MAGs; how adolescent participation and the interaction of boys and girls shaped the MAGs; to what extent the programme aligned to the youth's needs, contexts and requests; if and how the programme included vulnerable groups of children and what challenges this posed; and how and why the effectiveness of the MAGs varied in different contexts and over time.

The scope of the evaluation was considerably affected by the difficult political, security, and seasonal conditions in Afghanistan. The political transition in the country, and the resulting poor security situation throughout this period created severe challenges for data collection, postponing field research on two occasions and requiring methodological changes.

The insecure situation required significant changes in sampling and data collection approaches. Firstly, no group sessions were conducted as part of the evaluation to ensure participants' availability, privacy, and security. It should be noted that group sessions would have been particularly valuable for gathering data on community-level interventions; however, given the circumstances, they were substituted by an increased number of individual interviews. Secondly, migration, displacement, and heightened insecurity meant that many respondents were unavailable, which affected the sampling strategy, particularly in areas of Bamyan, and made it necessary to replace respondents on various occasions. Thirdly, fieldwork had to be postponed on two occasions, and by the time the security conditions had improved to the point where data collection was feasible, there was only a short time to carry it out before winter set in. Thus, both the security situation and weather challenges required a sampling strategy that a) minimised travel between data collection sites and b) reduced the time needed for data collection. As a result, data collection locations were selected, to a large extent based on the following criteria: i) villages with a higher number of MAG members (and therefore a larger number of potential respondents), ii) security considerations, and iii) access and logistical convenience. Therefore, the sample was biased towards more central locations with stronger participation, and thus the evaluation is not well suited to address questions of poor coverage or the failure of interventions due to inadequate implementation. It should be noted, however, that this issue was partially adjusted for by the fact that the unavailability of adolescents and mentors in some areas meant that the evaluation team in fact had to travel to further away locations to locate and interview respondents. Nevertheless, limitations of coverage of villages with lower levels of participation should be kept in mind and have been considered in the analysis of findings.

3 EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation adopted a Process Tracing (PT) approach to analyse whether changes expected to be related to the IALA programme occurred and whether they were in line with its Theory of Change.

PT is a case-based approach using Causal-Process Observations (CPOs), which enables the examination of specific cases in great detail (Beach and Pedersen, 2013). It is arguably the most important tool of causal inference in qualitative and case study research (George and Bennett, 2005) and the most useful to meet the requirements agreed by UNICEF and C4ED. PT, as used in this study, seeks to substantiate the existence of and to provide insight into the scope and operation of causal mechanisms between the intervention and observed changes. In other words, the approach helped to determine if, how, and why causal mechanisms embedded in the ToC have occurred and what (expected and unexpected) effects they have had. To this end, the research team compared the assumptions underlying the programme with the quantitative findings of the midline evaluation and the qualitative evidence obtained at endline. It identified intermediate outcomes and tested the processes leading to them against competing hypotheses (alternative explanations), based on the empirical evidence gathered. These tests helped to establish if and when: (1) a specific process took place, (2) a different process occurred after the initial event, and (3) whether the former was a cause of the latter (Mahoney, 2012). It is important to note that just like most theory-based evaluation approaches, process tracing cannot conclusively *establish* causality unlike what is possible with experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations. However, it can *infer* the presence of plausible causal “mechanisms” and thus is very useful in theory-based evaluations.

According to Beach & Pedersen (2019, p. 11-12), PT can have three distinct research purposes: “testing whether a causal mechanism is present in a case” (theory-testing PT), “building a theoretical mechanism” (theory-building PT), and “crafting an explanation that accounts for a particular outcome” (explaining-outcome PT). The case-centric design of this study, focused on gaining comprehensive in-depth insight into the IALA programme, combined the first and the third variants: theory-testing and explaining-outcome PT. The application of these two PT variants in this evaluation is further described at the beginning of Sections 4 and 5.

Theory-testing PT was used to test the validity and assumptions of the Theory of Change developed in the midline evaluation and to analyse whether the respective causal mechanisms expected to lead to particular outcomes were present and occurred as assumed. Explaining-outcome PT helped to obtain a good understanding of how these mechanisms worked and was used to compare the evidence for several competing explanations and to identify the ones that were most robustly supported by evidence. The problem of attribution is addressed in the PT approach by carrying out “process induction” where a number of (competing) hypotheses that connect an intervention to an outcome through a “chain” of causal mechanisms and intervening steps is identified (White and Philips 2012). Each of these hypotheses is then examined against the evidence, which can then eliminate, confirm, strengthen or weaken a particular hypothesis. By examining the entire series/chain of intervening “links” against the evidence, we come to the series of linked hypotheses, which connects the intervention to the outcome (Befani and Stedman-Bryce 2017).

The combination of both variants of PT, together with a broad empirical exploration of programme-related processes and outcomes, gave the evaluation an open-ended, inductive character. Accordingly, the empirical evidence, presented in Section 4, provided a comprehensive understanding of the intervention and the basis for identifying, refining, and testing meaningful alternative hypotheses about causal mechanisms, presented in Section 5. A narrow theory-testing exercise on its own, without a more open-ended exploration of processes and outcomes, would pose the danger of missing important aspects that are crucial to understand how the intervention was implemented and what it achieved in what way in the local contexts.

We found the combination of theory-testing and explaining-outcome PT with an open-ended empirical exploration of processes and outcomes particularly suitable for the case of the IALA intervention that broke new ground in targeting adolescents in Afghanistan. The approach supported our aim of covering all relevant factors and processes contributing to, shaping, or preventing changes and outcomes. It helped to determine whether and how the apparently interlocking components of the IALA programme were effectively united in a process to produce the final desired outcome, namely the increased educational, health and social empowerment of adolescents.

Two main kinds of empirical tests were used as part of our PT approach. In PT literature, they are known as hoop tests and smoking gun tests (Schmitt and Beach, 2015). A hoop test proposes that a given piece of evidence – a CPO – must be present for a hypothesis to be valid. Failing a hoop test eliminates a hypothesis but passing a hoop test does not confirm a hypothesis. Smoking gun tests, by contrast, propose that if a given CPO is present, the hypothesis must be valid. Passing a smoking gun test lends decisive support in favour of a hypothesis, though failing a smoking gun test does not eliminate a hypothesis (Mahoney, 2012). Hoop tests and smoking gun tests were used in the IALA end-line evaluation to assess hypotheses. More specifically, departing from the existing ToC and the findings of the midline quantitative evaluation, it was analysed (1) which activities, processes, and changes have occurred during the duration of the programme’s implementation and (2) what CPOs influenced the observed programme’s results and through which mechanisms. The theory testing variant PT is applied to

analysing findings listed in Section 4, structured by the five key evaluation criteria (relevance, fidelity/coherence, coverage, effectiveness and sustainability). Explaining outcome PT as, presented in Section 5, seeks to establish causal chains among events, processes, and explanations for changes that are believed to have occurred during the programme.

3.2 THEORY OF CHANGE

In order to paint a clear picture of the ways IALA was meant to achieve its goals and to compare this with the empirical evidence, it was vital to create a theoretical causal chain. This allowed us to structurally think about the programme and highlights the channels through which it aimed to achieve impact. It also identified all assumptions that needed to hold for the causal chain to succeed and the possible difficulties in the fulfilment of these assumptions.

The Theory of Change (ToC) that was tested using PT (see Section 3.1) is largely based on a theoretical results chain elaborated in the midline report, which in turn built upon the programme ToC created by the UNICEF-IKEA foundation during the design of the whole South Asian Programme for Improving Adolescents' Lives. However, as noted above, the ToC in this report does not cover the third pillar of the IALA programme, service providers.

Two of the building blocks of this ToC, i.e., the goals and outcomes, are stemming from the Afghanistan version of the ToC prepared by UNICEF. Besides the goals and outcomes, we also used another building block – the outputs – as defined in the IKEA-AFG ToC, although these are slightly blurred between outcomes and outputs. To support our efforts of drafting an informed theoretical chain of results, we also examined literature on the targeted outcomes and their mediators, as well as on the experiences with similar programmes and interventions in other countries.

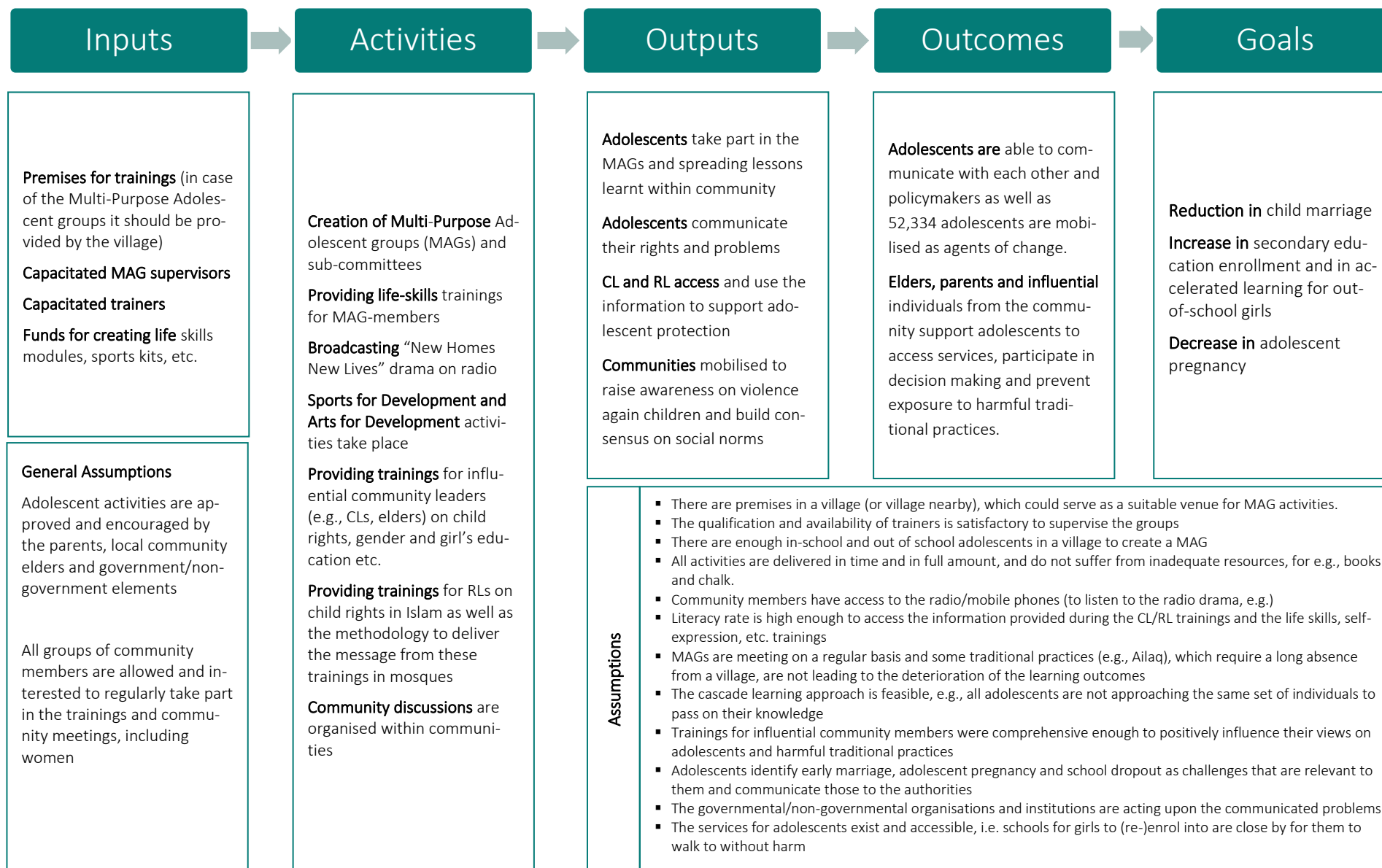


Figure 3: Theory of Change
(Source: IALA Midline Evaluation, 2020)

Stith et al. (2006) identified several assumptions which could be considered to generally apply to community-based interventions. **Firstly**, a community must be ready to implement a programme, i.e., there should be enough capacity, and the community must recognise that the problem exists, and the current measures taken – if any – are not sufficient to cope with it. Accordingly, it is assumed that when adolescents are communicating their problems to authorities, they indeed identify early marriage, pregnancy, and school dropout as relevant. A survey of adolescents' major challenges in Afghanistan by Blum et al. (2019) suggests that adolescents indeed find access to education important. However, it is commonly valued more for boys than for girls. Survey respondents also considered early marriage a significant barrier to schooling. This is in line with the report from the Asia Foundation (2018), which identified illiteracy and lack of education opportunities as major challenges in reducing child marriage.

Secondly, “partnerships” between key community stakeholders should exist in the communities. These can include a wide range of groups (i.e., not only the most influential ones), and are characterised by mutual trust. Furthermore, a programme should fit to the previously identified needs and preferences of the community members. Thus, the community and the relevant authorities should act and react adequately with the aim to alleviate the challenges raised by adolescents.

Another assumption described by Stith et al. (2006) is that a programme is delivered according to its design: one way to achieve balance between necessary adaptations to the context and population, and programme fidelity, is to define the core components of the intervention. Programme implementation should largely be in line with the design along those core components. Moreover, the required resources and supervision should be calculated and clearly outlined for each stage of the implementation.

Taking into account the delicate situation of Afghanistan, it is important that the interventions are approved by governmental (and non-governmental) entities, so that the process of change in social values does not result in an adverse situation for those involved, even more so if these are life threatening. Moreover, as a general assumption for any programme involving children, adolescents must have their parents' support and acknowledgement to (regularly) take part in the MAGs or life-skills training, which might be especially difficult for girls. Stith et al. (2006) also indicate that all sections of the population – including the vulnerable ones – should be able to actively take part in the meetings and other activities, so that not only the opinions of the most influential groups (e.g., wealthier or elder males) determine the course of action.

Thirdly, traditional practices in the intervention area must also be accounted for. This applies, for instance, to Ailq herding in Bamyán, which requires adolescents to leave the village for periods of time. Thus, it is assumed that these “gaps” do not threaten the achievement of learning outcomes to be achieved by the programme. Finally, it is important that the cascade method for knowledge dissemination is generally feasible, i.e., adolescents can not only safely move outside of their residence in the village, but also know a differing set of people whom they can approach.

Building on the empirical findings presented in Section 4, Section 5 analyses whether the assumed causal mechanisms leading to expected outcomes occurred. In this section, we split each outcome into a series of intermediate outcomes and create a chain leading from one intermediate outcome to the next, with counterfactual hypotheses at each step being tested against the evidence.

3.3 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The research approach comprised a preliminary literature review, including in particular the findings of the mid-line evaluation, to inform the design of the research parameters, and questions, which further guided the data collection methodology. A conceptual framework developed in the initial stage supported the selection and framing of research questions and parameters, and how they interrelate with each other.

This evaluation focuses on those questions for which the qualitative methodology employed was best suited. The questions were selected on the basis of: i) the strengths of qualitative research to deliver answers to questions focusing on the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of processes and behaviours, and ii) the practical feasibility given the programme timeframe, resources, and prevailing security and logistical conditions.

The **Evaluation Matrix** in **Annex 2** presents a set of evaluation questions based on the key themes – programme theory validation, programme implementation, and adolescent empowerment – cross-connected by the five evaluation criteria (relevance, fidelity, coverage, effectiveness, sustainability).

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 Methodology

The set of qualitative research methods comprised semi-structured, in-depth interviews with programme stakeholders, including direct beneficiaries (adolescents, parents, community and religious leaders), with programme implementers, including trainers and teachers, and with core programme staff from the implementing NGOs and UNICEF.

The qualitative summative evaluation built on a baseline study carried out in 2017 and a midline quantitative impact evaluation conducted in 2019. To explore the programme in depth, a diverse variety of stakeholders was included in data collection for both treatment provinces (Bamyan and Badghis). Semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) with a purposive sample drawn from adolescents, parents, community and religious leaders, teachers, and trainers were supplemented by key informant interviews (KIIs) with programme implementers (AKF, WVA), UNICEF staff, and officials. Even though service providers were not the focus of the evaluation, the team had considered including government stakeholders (e.g., education services) in its KII sampling. However, due to the institutional uncertainty and unclear linkages between UNICEF and the new administration at the time, it was decided to instead address programme implementation staff. The KIIs provided information and critical perceptions on the programme design and implementation, while the IDIs helped to explore communities' learning outcomes, perceived changes, perceptions, and viewpoints about the programme.

The sample was drawn up keeping three conditions in mind: feasibility, inclusiveness, and rigor. The selection of a smaller number of villages with a larger number of potential participants was done to reduce travel time between villages, as there were risks associated with travel and to ensure feasibility in terms of logistics. In this way, the researchers were able to sample a larger number of respondents in multiple ways. The focus on a smaller number of villages also helped to achieve theoretical saturation; that is identifying thematic issues in the villages studied until there were no fresh insights left to uncover.

The methodology was guided by the Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) as well as the UNICEF Evaluation Policy. The methodology was specifically designed to be child-sensitive and to allow for important disaggregation of the data, in particular by stakeholder group, gender and location.

3.4.2 Study area

The target area for the endline evaluation were the provinces of Bamyan & Badghis in Afghanistan, where the team selected 'treated' villages that were included in the midline evaluation. An initial list of potential sites for data collection was compiled in consultation with the local partners, keeping in mind the feasibility considerations discussed above (high number of potential respondents, logistics and security). Out of this initial listing, five villages per province were selected for the qualitative study in accordance with the above-mentioned criteria. Respondents were then selected from each of the villages on the basis of monitoring lists and with the support of the UNICEF regional offices, AKF, and WVA in Bamyan and Badghis.

Table 1 List of villages selected for data collection in each province

Bamyan	Badghis
Haider Abad	Darwish Mohammadi
Jula	Dahan Baghak
Khaja Ganj	Baghlar zad Morad
Sayalayak	Kandi Ha
Keligan	Khoda Madaha

3.4.3 Sampling strategy

Data collection consisted of individual interviews (IDIs, KIIs). The total number of interviews remained the same as initially planned, but the proportions of respondents from the different categories changed due to challenges in accessing data and respondents. No ALC teachers could be identified in Badghis, as a result of which additional KIIs were conducted, in consultation with UNICEF. In Bamyan, two MAG supervisors were interviewed due to the unavailability of MAG mentors.

Table 2 Total interviews conducted by category of respondents

Bamyan	Badghis
15 - MAG Members	15 - MAG Members
13 - MAG Parents	12 - MAG Parents
6 - RL / CL	6 - RL / CL
3 - ALC Teacher	<i>No ALC Teachers were available in Badghis</i>
4- MAG Mentors & 2 MAG supervisor	6 - MAG Mentors
3 - KIIs	5 - KIIs
46	44
Total = 90	

Initially, a stratified random sampling method was adopted for IDIs based on monitoring lists, but in the later stages of the data collection and due to the unavailability of some targeted participants, the local research team, in consultation with C4ED, conducted purposive snowball sampling to identify substitutes with a similar profile (e.g., respecting age range, schooling category). Different procedures for selection were decided by C4ED in consultation with the local team for identifying and locating each category of participants, as follows:

Adolescents (MAG Members): Adolescents aged 12 or above who took part in IALA through the flagship initiative of the Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAG) were identified as a key group for interviews, with the highest share of the sampling. The local research team coordinated with UNICEF, AKF, and WVA teams to collect the lists of the MAG participants in each of the 10 villages. On this basis, the evaluation team proposed stratified random sampling for selecting the participants out of defined categories in terms of: gender (a gender-balanced sample was identified), age (adolescents younger and older than 15 years), and in- and out-of-school. The local research team coordinated with UNICEF and implementing partners for identifying and contacting the respondents in the areas. During the initial stages of planning, it was decided that the IPs (AKG & WV) in each region would accompany the local research team in the field. However, due to their staff shortage, this was not possible, although they were engaged for contacting adolescents and to ensure adolescents' comfort and promote their confidence. Different situations were encountered in the two provinces, requiring a different approach to locate participants. For Badghis, the local research team found all sampled respondents along with the substitutes based on the lists and proceeded with data collection without requiring any changes to the sampling methodology. In Bamyan, the local research team could not locate most of the sampled respondents nor the substitute respondents according to the lists provided; therefore, snowball sampling was conducted, in close coordination with the AKF team.

Parents of MAG members: Parents of the participating adolescents were identified for interviews to incorporate their perspectives and to explore changes and barriers in adolescents' immediate environments. Parents of interviewed MAG members were selected and interviewed on the basis of the lists provided by the AKF and WVA teams. In case of unavailability of the parents of any MAG Member due to death or migration, the local research team replaced the participants with the parents of other MAG Members who were available.

MAG Mentors/ Life Skills Trainers: MAG mentors who provided the Life Skills Trainings to adolescents in the context of MAGs were included in the respondent sample. Lists of MAG Mentors were provided by the AKF and WVA teams. However, as the locations given for mentors was their workplace, and the majority had left these due to the programme ending, most mentors were difficult to locate. Due to the limited availability of MAG mentors, randomized sampling was not feasible. The local research team in consultation with the local partners thus identified the available MAG mentors in the areas and interviewed them. In cases where more than the needed number of mentors were available, the local research team selected the respondents randomly from those available.

Community/Religious Leaders: Community and religious leaders who took part in IALA activities (the training Child Rights in Islam or in Community Dialogues) were identified as relevant stakeholders for interviews. Lists of religious leaders who took part in UNICEF trainings were made available to the local research team; however, these were not digitized and in many cases were not available in English. In Bamyan, locating religious leaders was challenging for the local team as those sampled from the lists refused participation, mainly due to the political transition. To address this issue, UNICEF provided the local research team with substitute respondents who agreed to be interviewed. In Badghis, leaders from the list were interviewed by the local research team but through convenience sampling, as there were difficulties in accessing them. These difficulties in reaching respondents are considered in the analysis of the findings, in particular with regard to effectiveness.

Accelerated Learning Centre (ALC) Teachers: Locating teachers in charge of Accelerated Learning Centres (ALCs) was challenging in both provinces. No ALCs could be identified in Badghis, whereas for Bamyan, a list was provided by UNICEF. The local research partner then randomly selected respondents from the available ALCs and contacted them by phone to conduct the interviews. To address the unavailability of ALCs in Badghis, IDIs were replaced with additional KIIs in consultation with UNICEF.

Key Informant Interviews: Programme staff from UNICEF and from implementing NGOs (AKF and WVA) involved in programme design and/or implementation, as well as government officials working on child protection issues (as per availability) were identified as categories of respondents to be included in key informant interviews.

3.4.4 Research instruments / Guides and data collection

Seven interview guides were designed according to the typology of respondents:

- IDI guide for adolescents who participated in IALA's Multi-purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs)
- IDI guide for parents of adolescents who participated in the MAGs
- IDI guide for community/religious leaders who took part in training/community discussions
- IDI guide for MAG Mentors/Life Skills Trainers
- IDI guide for Accelerated Learning Centre (ALC) teachers
- KII guide for NGO implementers / UNICEF staff
- KII guide for national stakeholders

The guides were prepared to cover all important aspects of the evaluation matrix, while also allowing the researchers to probe for more details. Semi-structured interview guides with open questions were drafted to encourage the respondents to discuss the topics from their own perspectives, to elaborate on their narratives, and to be able to capture unexpected themes or areas of interest that were not considered in the design. Interviewers were encouraged to probe on answers provided to ensure understanding of the participants' points of view and discussion of topics in their own words. Furthermore, this approach with open-ended questions was deemed

useful for discussing the types of topics that were of interest to the evaluation, many of which were of quite a sensitive nature (e.g., social and gender norms) and considered as the best option to engage the target groups, particularly the adolescents. The exploration of perspectives, experiences, and learning outcomes according to gender was incorporated in all question guides, to ensure the comprehensive coverage of this factor.

The guides prepared were reviewed critically by C4ED to ensure they were in line with safeguarding protocols and were child and gender sensitive. Separate IDI guides for adults and for adolescents were developed to ensure that questions were age-appropriate, easily understandable, and relatable to their contexts. In addition, guides for interviews comprised procedures to ensure participants' comfort and privacy at the time of the interview; informed consent for adults and informed parental consent in the case of adolescents; explanation of anonymity procedures; inclusion of guidelines for stopping the interviews or skipping questions in case of concern; as well as contacts of the field coordinator and/or implementing partner to reach out after the interview in case of need. More details on these procedures can be found in Section 3.6: Ethical Considerations.

Interview guides were first prepared in English and then reviewed, contextualized, and translated into Dari by a local research partner with excellent knowledge of the contexts in both provinces, following guidelines to ensure context appropriateness while ensuring questions did not lose their essence. Question guides were tested during the pilot phase and reviewed in a post-pilot session to ensure any adjustments required.

3.4.5 Data collection process

Two teams of local researchers were employed in Bamyan and Badghis. They were recruited within their respective provinces to ensure their understanding of the local contexts and to limit potential transportation challenges. To carry out the data collection among severe security concerns and extreme weather conditions, the local research team followed an established field protocol for sampling, locating and engaging respondents. Before the interviews, verbal and recorded consent were obtained from all participants.

Interviews were conducted in person with all typologies of participants to ensure a higher level of engagement and better sources of qualitative data. Interviews took approximately between 45 and 60 minutes with adolescents and community members, and 60–80 minutes with programme implementers and relevant stakeholders. Interviews were successfully recorded in all cases, after participants had been informed of the purpose of the interview and consent had been obtained. Anonymity of responses was ensured to all respondents, noting that their responses would be kept in confidentiality and were to be utilized only for the purposes of the research, with no personal identifiable information to be quoted.

As data was uploaded throughout the fieldwork period, the evaluation team reviewed data quality and provided feedback to the field coordinator. A data monitoring sheet with the tools carried out and the data uploaded was completed daily by the field coordinator and used for data monitoring between the local research partner and C4ED. Raw interview data were afterwards coded using MAXQDA software and stored securely in our cloud-based servers.

3.4.6 Coding and data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to derive findings from the data collected in three steps: 1. Content analysis of each piece of data collected (i.e., examining each interview separately); 2. Deeper thematic analysis; 3. Comparison of the different interviews/qualitative material (Flick 2011, 403ff. in Pfaffenbach and Reuber, 2005).

Qualitative content analysis provides a systematic way of extracting information from interviews and other qualitative data, while ensuring openness to unexpected outcomes (Gläser and Laudel, 2009). Each interview data was coded in an iterative process that followed a coding structure developed on the basis of the evaluation questions and key themes outlined in the evaluation matrix. The evaluation team utilised MAXQDA software to structure and systematise each step. Next, the coded extracts were subjected to in-depth content analysis to identify and explain patterns, trends, and discrepancies in respondents' views and behaviours, as well as meaningful relations between themes of interest under the evaluation questions. Furthermore, at this stage, researchers compared and contrasted the findings from the midline evaluation and the qualitative summative evaluation for each question and relevant theme. Subsequently, researchers re-clustered the data according to the Theory of Change sequence, to establish if and to what extent the steps had been followed, as well as how and to what extent the outcomes were realised. Qualitative content analysis is a very useful starting point for carrying out process tracing (Gläser and Laudel, 2019)

3.4.7 Limitations and constraints

This section lists the various types of limitations and challenges faced during the evaluation, which were considered for methodological and sampling adjustments as well as in the interpretation of findings.

Non-MAG adolescents were not included in the sample: Therefore, the quality of the knowledge delivery and reception of Life Skills Trainings (LST) between MAG members and non-MAG members could not be analysed. This limitation, however, is confined to the aspect of MAG members' communication with their peers, while their

communication and exchanges with community and religious leaders (CLs, RLs) and parents were covered from both sides, i.e., from the adolescents' own perspectives and from the parents' and leaders' perceptions.

Distribution of the respondents and disaggregation: The monitoring lists of the implementing NGOs were prepared according to school locations which were named as villages. Since the schools would usually involve MAG Members from the surrounding villages, the research team had to visit the nearby locations to meet the respondents. This extended the team's field coverage as well as the operations to ensure that the sample numbers were met. Moreover, since it is challenging to get disaggregated data in Afghanistan, difficulties in disaggregating data by gender, age, disability, and socially excluded groups remained a challenge.

Challenges in respondent outreach and selection: The research team encountered difficulties in meeting the required numbers of respondents in the study areas according to the design, as a result of several contextual issues. In Bamyan, it was difficult to find respondents from the M&E lists, as various dynamics limited their availability, including migration and changes to their circumstances. In some cases, the team resorted to village leaders for assistance in finding respondents, relying on the snowballing technique. Challenges with the selection of villages persisted, and the research team engaged in consultations and on-site situational analysis considering prevailing law and order, weather, and accessibility issues, to then proceed to locate substitute respondents meeting the same criteria. MAG mentors were particularly difficult to locate as their contractual relationship with the programme had ended, which meant that they had moved on to other jobs or locations. In addition, in Bamyan most religious leaders refused to be interviewed, while some were also unavailable due to migration after the regime change. The UNICEF team was contacted for support and the interviews were conducted with the religious leaders who gave their consent to the UNICEF team. There were similar challenges with the availability of the ALC respondents, as many were not present in the research locations, and none were located in Badghis. Overall, the unavailability of respondents in Bamyan remained an overall challenge, which meant the team had to resort to convenience sampling in some cases, as mentioned.

Respondent recall/ Full programme participation issues: Given the fact that programme activities had ended one year prior to the interviews, some stakeholders had difficulties recalling the events and in providing answers to the question guides, in particular parents. Moreover, illiterate respondents encountered more difficulty in answering questions and were found to be less interested in the programme or having skipped sessions/activities. The research team sought to resolve these issues through providing additional details, building rapport and probing, which facilitated the process.

Weather and road conditions: The primary data collection was delayed due to the political transition and the resulting security situation in the country, which brought the fieldwork timeline at the brink of extreme cold weather. At the time when interviews were initiated, some of the target locations had started receiving snowfall, which created a huge challenge for C4ED and local partner teams. Given the mountainous geography of some areas, difficult road conditions made it challenging for the research team to reach locations.

3.5 GENDER AND ADOLESCENTS' RIGHTS

The evaluation took into consideration the principles and guidelines of UNEG (2014) for integrating gender and human rights (in particular, adolescent rights) in the study, from the planning stages and tool design to the data collection process.

The research team established research protocols based on UNICEF's *Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis* to ensure that the physical safety and emotional well-being of adolescents was promoted and safeguarded during the entire research process. This included ensuring the respect of the best interest of the adolescents and to do no harm. Accordingly, adolescents were first contacted through networks of trust (implementing partners). Contacts to refer to were provided in case of need. Their privacy, confidentiality, and data security were protected through established field protocols in interviews, transcription, and analysis, and informed consent was obtained from their guardians and informed assent from themselves. This is in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring that the child's views are respected and that participation in the study does not do any harm and is in the best interest of the child.

Adolescents' rights and agency were considered in this target group's engagement for interviews and in the formulation of questions to explore the issues of relevance to them in the context of the programme. Evaluation questions were designed in a way to allow for an intersectional analysis of boys and girls, as well as vulnerable groups, like out-of-school and illiterate children. Attention was paid to the impacts of the intervention and any unexpected effects on women and vulnerable groups. The team was also attentive to ensure that vulnerable groups were included in the sampling, with representation of out-of-school adolescents as well as in-school adolescents, and from villages that held different distances from the provincial centres.

Gender equality and the empowerment of (young) women (GEEW) was moreover integrated throughout the planning and implementation of the evaluation. Gender equality and women empowerment were considered in drafting the interview guidelines. Gender aspects were interrogated in the findings to several evaluation questions, as this dimension was considered essential in view of the type of programme being evaluated and the target population involved: adolescents, and in particular, girls (see, for example, Sections 4.1.2 and 4.3.2).

The evaluation team was recruited locally to ensure their knowledge of the culture, customs, and practices of each of the target provinces, and to be mindful of the implications of these in the implementation of the study, from the revision and contextualization of the tools to the interviews and post-interview work. This also included the understanding of ethnic structures and the respect for local power structures that would allow the team to carry out the interviews in these areas. Gender roles were also taken into consideration in accordance with the local context. The team was gender balanced and it was ensured that qualified female researchers interviewed female counterparts wherever this was relevant according to the local norms. Furthermore, the evaluation team ensured a gender balance in the sample of adolescents to be interviewed, by selecting 50% female and 50% male, to ensure equal participation in the discussion of experiences and the consideration of findings.

More details on the ethical considerations overall and for the protection of adolescents are given below.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

C4ED is committed to ensuring that all research and evidence generation activities undertaken are ethical, particularly when research involves children and young people. Both C4ED and the local research partner Almansoora Solutions Ltd. are independent entities which had no conflict of interest in the pursuit of this data collection. Research protocols addressing both ethics and protection were developed and applied throughout the evaluation, in line with in-country requirements, UNICEF's *Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*, and UNICEF Office of Research's Ethical Guidelines. Ethical clearance was obtained through an external ethical review approved by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections in November 2021 (please see Annex 7).

The key ethical principles underpinning this research with children and young people were: (a) ensuring the best interests of the child are at the heart of the research; (b) informed consent / assent obtained, in an entirely voluntary way; (c) no harm has occurred as a result of taking part (or refusing to take part) in the research; (d) respondents are protected in terms of the confidentiality of the information they provide, and all information collected is held securely; and (e) no payments made to respondents to induce them to take part in the research. Moreover, given the health-related circumstances under which the research took place, implications due to COVID 19 were carefully considered. C4ED implemented the ethical protocols at all phases of the research from planning (e.g., design of the questionnaire, selection of target groups and sample points), to fieldwork (selection of respondents and data collection), to analysis (e.g., data handling and storage). In all aspects, the safety of both interviewers and respondents was considered paramount.

The research is expected to contribute towards the strengthening of child protection and child rights in Afghanistan by providing evidence of what works and what does not work to enhance the target groups' knowledge, improve their access to information, and support their rights to healthier and safer lifestyles. The research findings are expected to contribute to building an evidence base for lessons learned and good practices to support child protection and child rights in Afghanistan and the wider region. They also provide insight into the experiences, perceptions, and needs of Afghan adolescents and the actions that can be taken to improve their living conditions and the fulfilment of their rights. The overall findings from the study provide an important basis for the design of future interventions aiming to improve adolescents' lives.

3.6.1 Engagement of participants, consent and safeguarding procedures

Consent information was prepared by C4ED, revised and translated by the local research partner, and read out to each participant by researchers prior to the interview. All informed consent included ethical components regarding: i) objectives and content of the study, ii) privacy and data security, iii) voluntary participation, iv) the right to refuse or skip any questions without consequences, and v) source to follow-up regarding complaints or further information on the study. Moreover, implications due to COVID 19 were carefully considered. *Informed consent and assent* (in the case of adolescents) were obtained from all respondents who took part in the study. Consent and assent were taken verbally and recorded to reduce any potential risks for respondents in carrying their information on paper in the uncertain circumstances of the country's political transition.

A 3-step procedure for respondent outreach was followed:

1. Contact with the potential respondent was made through the implementing NGO, to inform about the research and introduce the local research team.
2. Contact with the respondent was made by the local research team to ensure respondents' agreement and availability, and an appointment was scheduled according to the interviewee's convenience.
3. Interview was conducted in person, as per the implementer's recommendation and interviewee's preference.

For the case of adolescents/MAG members, the implementer's field staff was requested to act as the go-between, as the MAG mentors were not easily located. First, parental consent for the interview was obtained, and then an appointment was made by the local research team with the respondent, after being informed by the implementer's staff.

A *safeguarding procedure* was developed, contextualized, and implemented by the local research partner. Safeguarding is a key concern and responsibility in the delivery of this evaluation, particularly in the current context of Afghanistan. Qualitative researchers were trained on key ethical principles and protocols for safeguarding children in the training preceding data collection. Safeguarding questions were included in the introduction of the question guides to ensure safe and private conditions for the adolescent interviewees. Appointments were made in advance in accordance with interviewees' requirements, to ensure a suitable timing and privacy as much as it was feasible. Programme implementers were consulted for best options to ensure adolescents' privacy. In addition, a contact/referral to relevant personnel from the implementing NGOs as well as for our field coordinator was given, to ensure that adolescents could reach out in case of need.

3.6.2 Ethical procedures during data collection

To protect respondents' privacy and ensure their safety and wellbeing, data collection was carried out through individual interview sessions for all typologies of interviewees, and at times and locations of the interviewee's choosing. The requirements for the interview locations were that the location ensures the privacy and safety of respondents. Due to the potential sensitivity of some of the questions, a distinct protocol for consulting minors was observed throughout the entire data collection. This was strongly built on safeguarding principles and interviewing techniques on sensitive topics and vulnerable groups.

The research team had a strong preference for collecting data in person, and the approach taken ensured adequate social distancing was maintained and other protective measures utilized. The research employed several procedures to ensure safety of data collectors in the field, including taking input from local actors, identifying safest routes, and establishing a clear system for communication and support. In addition, researchers were instructed to refer any violations identified among the children by caregivers to the appropriate service providers.

All data were collected in audio recordings and paper/tablet formats. Once data collection was completed, the audio recordings from the interviews were uploaded to secure, cloud-based servers only accessed by C4ED and authorized parties, and then deleted from the researchers' recording devices. Recordings were named according to numerical codes and typologies of respondents, with no personal identifiable information recorded. Our data protection policy (DPA) includes ensuring that data is not shared and/or utilized for any purpose other than this evaluation.

Risks, challenges and mitigation strategies

Several challenges had to be faced and mitigated for the evaluation to take place, considering the political, institutional and security contexts, as well as the public health situation in the country.

Challenges to field data collection linked with the ongoing political transition were overall mitigated to the extent possible, by ensuring continued consultation with UNICEF and implementing partners, working with local Afghan researchers who had greater access to areas that are potentially inaccessible to outsiders, and monitoring of field-work procedures and locations to ensure that researchers proceeded only if safe to do so.

C4ED sought to mitigate risks through a wide set of approaches. Firstly, on the institutional front, we sought the endorsement of local authorities for the data collection exercise through UNICEF's regional offices. International and regional organisations were still operating in the regions where this evaluation took place, which showed a certain disposition of the authorities to acceptance of their work. Secondly, the implementing NGOs and their grounded district staff acted as intermediaries to reach respondents and to help ensure their safety. In addition, we engaged a local partner for the study, who has prior experience in the areas where data collection took place, including close networks with village leaders, which reduced risks considerably.

Considering the regime change, respondents could be vulnerable to social, legal, and political risks, particularly in the case of women and girls. Past participation in the IALA programme was not identified as a risk by the implementing staff. Although the information obtained was related to the programme activities, effects, and insights into its implementation, the nature of the topics addressed by IALA (e.g., child marriage, girls' education) was considered sensitive in the present political landscape. These concerns were partially addressed by ensuring consent from village leaders through implementing NGOs in the locations where data collection took place.

The COVID-19 situation at the time of data collection was stable in both provinces, and hospitals were working in their normal routine rather than in an emergency situation seen at other points in time in Afghanistan. COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures were followed by researchers at all times, including mask wearing, frequent use of hand sanitizers, and following social distancing protocols.

4 EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents the evaluation findings organised by the five key evaluation criteria (relevance, fidelity/coherence, coverage, effectiveness, and sustainability). To enhance clarity in reporting, we privileged these five criteria for clustering the results. However, it should be noted that under each criterion, questions on the three key themes of the evaluation were explored (programme theory validation, programme implementation, and adolescent empowerment) – as per the previously approved evaluation matrix presented in Annex 2. Empirical data collected through qualitative methods (see sections 3.4.4 and 3.4.5) were then coded using MAXQDA software as per the key themes and evaluation criteria and are summarised and discussed below. Qualitative content analysis is a very useful starting point for carrying out process tracing (Gläser and Laudel, 2019).

The evaluation questions were developed based on the programme’s Theory of Change, which was outlined in the midline evaluation. Questions were formulated to establish a clear pathway to generate evidence that could help us understand the causal processes anticipated in programme theory, how these worked (or did not work) in practice, and to test the assumptions made explicit there. At the same time, they allowed for unanticipated aspects to be explored. Evidence from the qualitative summative evaluation was triangulated with the midline’s quantitative results to answer each evaluation question; these findings are presented in the current section.

The evidence collected was then re-clustered according to the Theory of Change sequence, to establish if and to what extent the steps had been followed. In Section 5, we apply the Process Tracing approach to analyse the evidence collected and summarised in Section 4. In Section 5 we discuss how and to what extent the anticipated causal mechanisms occurred and the expected outcomes of IALA were achieved for the target groups. This includes the testing of alternative explanations for the changes observed using intermediate outcomes and competing hypotheses.

4.1 RELEVANCE

4.1.1 Adaptability of IALA activities to adolescents’ needs and contexts

The contexts in which IALA operated are characterized by multifaceted challenges that affect adolescents. One of the most prominent challenges mentioned by various stakeholder groups is poverty. IALA’s target areas are marked by precarious living conditions, and lack of employment and financial resources to ensure good nutrition, which leave families in difficult situations and which, combined with prevalent social and gender norms, fosters the persistence of harmful traditions, such as child labour, child marriage, high dowry, and girl-for-girls exchanges. Vulnerable girls and boys are often deprived of an education, as they are involved in labour activities due to the poor economic conditions of their families, with boys taking part in agricultural labour and girls in household chores. Furthermore, girls’ education is affected by early marriage and prevalent gender norms that undervalue girls and discourage the continuation of their studies. In addition, stakeholders mentioned the limited access to healthcare, with health clinics usually far away or lacking resources. Additional issues include drug addiction, particularly among the idle youth in the context of the poppy cultivation, and heightened insecurity. These challenging socio-economic conditions have worsened in the aftermath of the political transition in Afghanistan. During the time of the evaluation, families were experiencing heightened financial difficulties, food shortages, and overall insecurity in their communities.

IALA sought to tackle three interrelated key challenges for adolescents in these contexts (early marriage, early pregnancy, school attendance) through placing adolescents at the centre of the intervention for the first time and working on awareness building of adolescents and their communities as well as on adolescent empowerment. IALA activities thus sought to produce changes in social norms and practices, by way of strengthening the adolescents’ place in society, providing them skills and empowering them to become agents of change, and raising awareness of their rights within their environments (parents and influential community members) to promote child protection.

The structure and activities implemented by IALA created an adolescent-friendly environment conducive to learning and knowledge exchange among peers as well as between adolescents and the adults in their communities (mentors, teachers, parents, leaders, etc.). Even though the overall topics to work on were introduced by the intervention and not defined by the adolescents, both the adolescents and adults agreed that the contents of the activities were relevant and applicable to adolescents’ lives. All interviewed adolescents stated that IALA had had a meaningful influence on their lives and had promoted positive changes by increasing their knowledge and enhancing their skills on a variety of topics of interest and relevance to them. The evaluation found that MAGs were well adapted to the local context and adolescent needs in terms of the relevance of the contents and activities prepared, the focus on gender and illiteracy, and the approach to social and gender norms from the Islamic perspective. However, MAGs did not sufficiently consider the economic issues that limited adolescents’ participation and that foster the persistence of the three key challenges addressed, as well as the determining role of parents in their contexts. Adolescents with less family support and economic problems are shown to have been more absent from MAGs and less able to take advantage of the intervention, which signals the need to provide additional support or implement changes to its design, so that these challenges can be addressed in the future. MAGs

aimed at changing social and gender norms and practices but did not sufficiently engage with some of the conditions that perpetuate them.

Firstly, it should be noted that **MAG contents and activities** were considered overall relevant to adolescents' lives by the various stakeholders involved, as well as engaging and instructive. Contents tapped into important needs and priorities in the adolescents' contexts, through its focus on issues experienced by adolescents, on gender, on education and on illiterate/out of school adolescents. The training programmes on life skills, self-expression, etc. were found to be appealing, instructional, and relevant to adolescents' lives, with practical contents that they could apply, including learning how to talk to and relate to others, how to make decisions and how to better express their emotions.

The training topics were defined and planned beforehand, based on the manuals compiled by technical personnel from AKF in coordination with UNICEF and WVA. Firstly, contents were taught in the Training of Trainers' and then cascaded to MAG members, and they were revised after an assessment on the original content. Topics were discussed with mentors to ensure adaptability and acceptance by communities. Both implementers and mentors considered the topics appropriate and mostly accepted by the communities.

"... if we thought some topics were sensitive, they would not be included, but most of the topics were very good and included in the programme and were accepted by the community." (KII 1, Programme staff, Bamyam, M)

"The curriculum we taught in the workshops we learned first. Then, according to the instructions given to us in the workshops, we taught the subjects. The topics given were in book form. We had a discussion every month. All the themes were very well adapted, because it was more in line with the tastes of the young people. In addition, most of these topics included scenarios, teamwork, and practical work, so it was very consistent with these topics. The students shared their interest and activities, and it was more enjoyable for us as coaches and to do the activities." (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

Even though adolescents did not seem to be involved in the prior definition of these topics, they mentioned that they could express their interest and were consulted about future topics to include. All in all, evidence from the interviews suggests that they had a good appropriation of the contents through the trainings, subsequent coaching sessions, and discussions in the MAG groups. Adolescents' responses clearly show that they felt the MAGs were about issues concerning their daily lives, and that topics were both engaging and instructional. Adolescents also pointed out that they had not learned these contents anywhere else.

"... at MAG, subjects that are taught have a direct impact on the adolescents' lives. This group helps young people to set their goals and get success. Even to increase their courage and learn leadership skills." (IDI, 57, MAG Member, Bamyam, F)

"It has been important in my life. All subjects have been related to my life, and I have achieved lots of information which I did not know." (IDI 6, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

The most remembered and valued topics included decision-making, goal setting, confidence, management of emotions, and critical thinking. All adolescents interviewed indicated satisfaction about the topics discussed, stating interest in all of them and noting that they were all applicable to their lives. They were reluctant to report anything they had not liked about what they studied in the MAG. They asserted that learning these skills had helped them to improve their lives in various ways. Adolescents' views in terms of the usefulness and applicability of MAG contents are backed by the group's mentors and supervisors.

"Yes, the issues were related to their lives, because they could solve their problems, for example, make their own life decisions, because they had learned new things that they did not know before, after knowing, for example, they had to become self-sufficient." (IDI 38, MAG Mentor, M, Badghis)

"The MAG programme was totally adapted to teenagers' activities. For example, self-knowledge, being a goal-oriented person, and decision making was really essential to their lives." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

In addition, both adolescents and mentors emphasized the practical nature of the work done in the MAGs, which fostered learning outcomes. Trainers considered the materials provided easy, instructional, and readily available to teach, for both the trainings and the committee activities. Some mentors recommended that it would be best to incorporate the adolescents' speech and way of talking into the contents of the teachings, to increase their interest and facilitate their understanding.

Besides the trainings, the activities developed at the MAG were considered relevant to the context, and adolescents' agency was incorporated in their design and implementation. The **work in sub-committees** better reflects adolescents' expression of interests and agency over the design of activities and inputs to contents. As per design, MAGs were divided into four sub-committees by themes, which adolescents joined according to their preferences. In the sub-committees, adolescents discussed together the ideas for activities to be implemented, which had a blueprint provided by the organisation (e.g., educational campaigns to be developed in the first year), but which gave adolescents space for prioritizing the topics they wanted to work on and the way of implementation. Boys and girls in the sub-committees mostly made the decisions together, except in the areas where MAGs were described to work separately for socio-cultural reasons. Through this work, adolescents had the opportunity to take part in different types of activities that appealed to their needs and interests, including arts (e.g., theatre) and sports.

"We organised activities through the conduction of meetings and coordinated between the members of the group. After that, we all came together and did the activities." (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyam, F)

"The decision in MAG was by the students and also the teacher, and sometimes students divided into the groups and voted about an activity. The activities decided were in the interest of the students. Yes, all the students made a decision together and everyone heard each other's speech." (IDI 10, MAG Member, F, Badghis)

Despite MAG relevance to the local context and adolescent needs through its focus on contents and activities specifically designed for adolescents, gender and illiteracy, from a design standpoint MAGs may not have sufficiently considered the economic needs that limited adolescents' participation and foster the persistence of some harmful practices. In this way, MAGs aimed at changing social and gender norms and practices but did not sufficiently engage with some of the conditions that perpetuate them. In addition, MAGs as they were designed did not fully account for the determining role of parents in their contexts. Adolescents with less family support and economic problems are shown to have been more absent from MAGs and less able to take advantage of the intervention, which signals the need to provide additional support or implement changes to its design so that these challenges can be addressed in the future.

It is important to note that MAGs' adaptability and suitability to the local context experienced some setbacks, which derived from the conditions of the areas where they operated, and the type of participants included. These presented challenges in terms of attendance and participation, particularly of vulnerable groups (see Sections 4.1.2, 4.3.2, 4.33).

The programmes directed at the adolescents' immediate environments, including trainings and community discussions, can also be considered to tap into adolescents' needs and priorities, even though they were not directed at adolescents. Firstly, these programmes addressed topics which are most influential to adolescents' everyday lives, including child marriage, the importance of education and gender equality. Secondly, considering the relevance of parental influence over adolescents' lives and decisions, these programmes rightly involved key stakeholders for adolescents' needs and priorities -even if a more systematic approach could have been better matched to parents' determining role in adolescents' lives.

4.1.2 Gender equality in MAG composition and structure

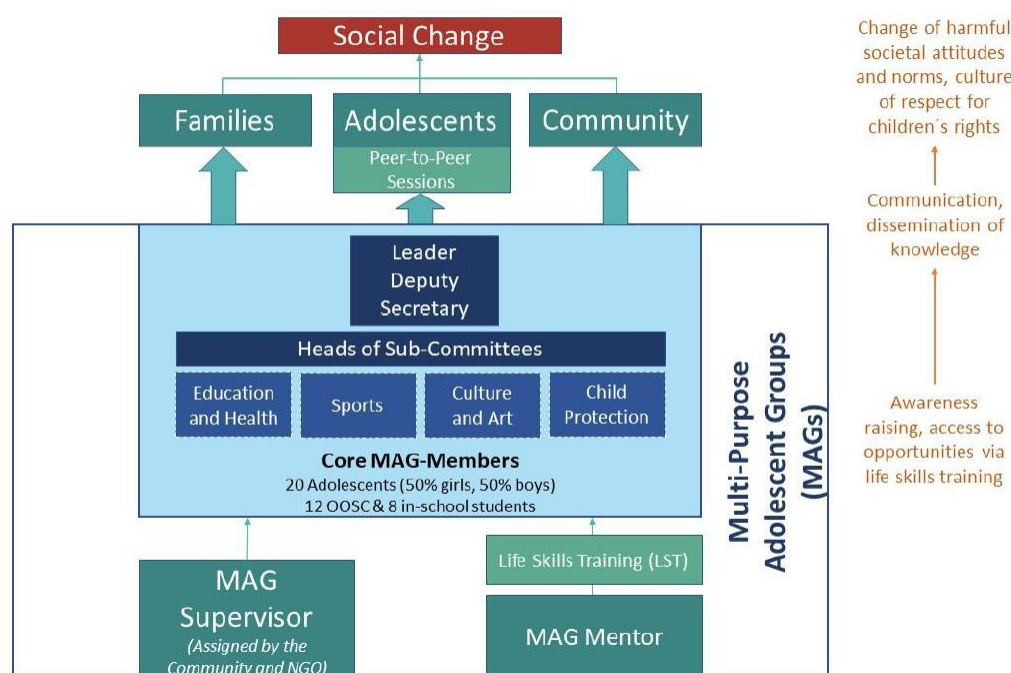


Figure 4: The structure of MAGs (Source: C4ED elaboration in midline report)

MAGs targeted adolescents in the age group of 10 to 19 years, with a gender balance (50% girls, 50% boys), and a prominent number of out-of-school children (generally 12 out of 20) to foster their participation and inclusion. The respect of socio-cultural norms in the target communities was considered in the organisation of MAGs. For this reason, MAG activities were run separately for girls and boys in some areas, due to the traditional character of communities. According to stakeholders, girls and boys shared the MAG meetings in most areas of Bamyán – except in some areas, usually located further away from Bamyán's center (e.g., Kahmard, Saighan, parts of Shibar), while in Badghis it was more common to have the meetings separately, even though some MAG respondents there mentioned working together as well.

"A: They decided the activities totally separately in different places. It was because our cultures do not accept it.

Q: Did the girls hear the voices of boys?

A: No, the girls did not hear the voices of boys" (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, M, Badghis)

“... the traditional nature of the communities were also some of our problems that we already discussed with MAG supervisors in such communities. And even the traditional nature of the communities allowed us to run some programmes separately for girls and boys. These were all our problems. But in Bamyán, we held most of the meetings with boys and girls.” (KII 1, Programme staff, Bamyán, M)

The MAGs also generally addressed some issues separately with boys and girls, in particular health, with women’s health issues such as menstruation addressed with girls only.

The MAGs were structured into sub-committees, with four groups divided by themes (child protection, education and health, sports, arts). Adolescents were consulted on their interests and joined the respective sub-committees. Within each sub-committee, roles and responsibilities for each MAG member were allocated, including the selection of a leader, a deputy, and a secretary. This gave the adolescents a clear structure for their learning and involvement, both within the MAG and in terms of community outreach. The leaders had a prominent role in helping to manage and organise MAG activities, and the selection of this role based on peer voting helped to boost adolescents’ self-esteem and position in the group. The set-up of these committees seems to have facilitated adolescents’ participation and ability to give their opinion and strengthened their decision-making via a practical approach. In the committees’ meetings, adolescents discussed together the ideas for activities to be implemented, including which topics to prioritise, what to do, when and where.

Interviewees expressed consistency regarding the MAG structure in terms of the set-up of four committees and the selection of roles. In addition, they reported to have one or two supervisors, who oversaw the MAG’s operations and could replace the mentor if they were not available. The activities were structured, discussed, and the implementation of community outreach activities outside the MAG organised around these committees. Mentors helped in the organisation and set up of the discussions and activities, but decisions were taken by the adolescents, in dialogue with the adult roles in the MAG.

“Well, decisions were usually made collectively, and the issues they wanted to do at school or community level were discussed together, and the discussion was about what the activities should be and who should implement them, and the materials or resources needed were fully understood. It all happened with the dialogue of supervisor, staff and teachers”. (IDI 82, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

Where mixed MAGs were organised, adolescents and mentors reported that group decisions were made together between boys and girls, and that voices were heard equally. The mixed approach proved useful, according to mentors, to improve girls’ and boys’ understanding of each other. Disagreements were solved by discussion, negotiation and conflict resolution, where life skills learned in the trainings could be put to use in a practical manner already in their MAG set-up. Mentors’ intervention was of particular relevance to ensure that both boys’ and girls’ voices were heard and that agreements could be reached together.

“Yes, there was disagreement. We had negotiation, conflict, and decision-making in the group. Because there were different people and there were various ideas that were solved by talking and consultations and choosing the right decision”. (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, F)

However, where the MAG was gender segregated, exchanges were clearly more limited, and the voices of girls and boys remained also separate.

“The girls and the boys all worked together and made their own decisions. By doing group work, they could both increase their self-confidence and learn how to relate to each other. For this purpose, the best solution was for the girl and the boy to work together, which is why in the group work what we did was that the girl and the boy were discussing side by side and resolving issues.” (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, F, Badghis)

Adolescents described a high level of autonomy in making decisions about what activities to do in the context of their committees in the MAGs. They reported consulting each other in their committees, discussing and hearing all members’ opinions, and ultimately making a common decision on which activities to pursue according to their interests.

“We organised activities through the conduction of meetings and coordinated between the members of the group. After that, we all came together and did the activities.” (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

Mentors’ roles were seen in helping to organise the set-up, and in providing guidance and conflict resolution support when needed. Disagreements were reportedly solved by listening to viewpoints through a common discussion until a decision was reached, which could include voting.

“If there were a disagreement in the group, we would ask both to sit down and we were listening to both side ideas. After that, we would make an opinion that both of them were satisfied with.” (IDI 39, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

4.1.3 Role of literacy and inclusion of illiterate children

The in-depth interviews (IDIs) revealed that the literacy rate of many MAG members was not high enough to access the information provided during the life skills trainings, as MAGs aimed at a significant percentage of out-of-school children (12 of the 20 members), many of which were illiterate. Various stakeholders conveyed that illiterate children had a more difficult time participating in, and grasping the concepts of the trainings, and it seems that retention was more difficult for them than for literate children. This challenge/difficulty was addressed by the trainers through initiatives such as having practical sessions using visuals, paintings, stories, and games, as well as encouraging the literate students to support their illiterate peers. After revisions of the trainings,

there were changes from having written materials to incorporating other visual-based and interactive ways of teaching, including work in the form of games, role playing, drawing, and other types of activities.

"The more activities and workshops there are, the more useful it is. If the training is theoretical, it may not be good for those who are illiterate, and if any practical activity is done, it will be just as useful and better. The activity was more attractive in our group rather than more explaining." (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, F)

"Yes, it was very effective for literate people to read the chapter but for some members, the games, the scenarios and the roles were very valuable" (IDI 56, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

"I used to draw my subjects in a way that both the literate and illiterate would learn. For example, we would explain a subject in decision making or in life skills section and we were asking them to paint for example. Both the illiterate and the literate could draw the same picture. Both the illiterate and the illiterate understood the subjects through painting and through practical work." (IDI 30, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

Mentors also stated that it was necessary to repeat the topics more than once so that they could be properly internalized by adolescents. Illiterate adolescents showed less engagement with the topics and the teachings at the MAG, and it was more difficult to retain them throughout the programme. Mentors expressed that the mixed combination of literate and illiterate teenagers was challenging to manage. They also mentioned that illiterate children had more difficulties to participate in the activities of the committees.

"For those who did not go to school, the lessons were a little difficult because they could not write, read, and the activities of the committees were difficult. But with cooperation of their president; those who could solve their problems amongst them consulted their union." (IDI 29, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

MAG adolescents were encouraged to support their illiterate counterparts to help them incorporate the teachings, for instance by sitting next to them in the trainings, and to solve problems when they could not. MAGs also had an effect on promoting literacy of out-of-school children, by encouraging students to improve their literacy skills, as well as by generating spaces to teach adolescents to read and write. In Bamyán, this also generated the launch of literacy groups to teach their peers, with the support of mentors and teachers.

"MAG was very useful because there were people who did not even have a pen and book, but through this MAG, they understand and become interested reading and writing and registered to school, they were very interested." (IDI 5, MAG Member, F, Badghis)

"We taught Multiple Adolescent Group members to read and write. Of course, we encouraged those who were illiterate and those who were literate to read these lessons together in groups." (IDI 30, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

MAG members also mentioned that literacy affected their mentoring practice, as they found illiterate peers more difficult to teach, with more challenges to understand the contents they would share.

These findings suggest that whereas illiteracy was a challenge at first, this was overcome to some extent by revising the training to be more accessible to illiterate children and through offering peer support by literate children. Though it is likely that this challenge was not completely overcome, and illiterate children benefitted less, it had the unexpected effect of motivating some children to learn to read and write.

4.1.4 MAG mentors/trainers' profiles and skills

The MAG trainer positions were announced publicly via the organisations' websites, and the selection was done through open competition. Mentors were preferably recruited from education and social science backgrounds. Many of the MAG mentors interviewed reported to be unemployed at the time of the evaluation. Mentors described the selection being made up of different stages; firstly, a CV evaluation, then a written test, and finally interviews for those who succeeded. Most mentors reported to be bachelor's degree graduates. After succeeding in the selection process, mentors received life skills training (LST) for 15 days on all 40 modules, and later in the programme they received refresher training. Mentors found that the topics and skills taught were useful for both themselves and the adolescents and that it had positive effects on their own lives. They also reported that the training received was sufficient to allow them to teach, and apart from the contents of the LST itself, it also trained them on how to organise activities, how to cope with students and how best to transfer the knowledge to them.

"Actually, the way that they were teaching us was really useful. Moreover, they taught us how to convey our knowledge to the students." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, M, Badghis)

"These trainings were very useful for me, and with them I was able to serve the community more. Among the trainings that were very useful for me were: peer pressure, creative thinking, problem solving, and banning children from addiction, recognizing the harms of intoxicants, and there were other issues... with these trainings I was well prepared to teach." (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, F, Badghis)

Mentors did not talk much about challenges of their training. One of the issues mentioned regarded the late distribution of materials (after the start of the school year), which was remedied by the next year. In terms of contents, one mentor in Bamyán mentioned that they wished the children's rights section had been more thoroughly explained, while another mentioned that it would be good to provide the support of health professionals to address health topics in the groups. In addition, there were requests to have more visual materials and access to digital aids (and skills), as well as more interactive activities, games, etc. to teach the contents, as these were considered very useful, particularly for illiterate students.

"The other part is bringing some audio and video materials and resources that teenagers need; it can be a hard drive or a projector that can be funded very cheaply" (KII 3, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

MAG mentors were supported by supervisors and a group of trusted adult members of the community which provided assistance to and oversaw the MAG activities, including members of the village councils, elders, and school principals.

"In each group, there was an observer who could monitor the group's work at any time and supported the group where they had a problem. For example, if there was a campaign in the area where teenagers had difficulty in launching, these adults would support the team." (KII 2, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

"There was a group of 8 members in which elders of the community were members and supported us in the organisation of activities." (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyan, F)

4.1.5 Suitability of village premises to host MAG activities

Centrality was sought for while selecting MAG venues. Schools were usually the chosen places to hold MAG activities, which were considered mostly accessible and appropriate spaces from the MAG mentors' perspective. The location was in fact close for many adolescents, particularly those living in the village, but far away for those who came to the MAG from other places. NGO implementers liaised with the schools (who were in contact with the Department of Education) and with councils at village level for the selection of appropriate locations, and in many cases schools' facilities were given out to MAGs without costs for the meetings. However, MAGs still faced problems, particularly during the winters when schools were closed and alternative locations had to be found, including locations where heating was many times not available. Moreover, not all MAGs were given a specific location for the whole duration, so MAG meetings would be held as well at other locations, including private houses, mosques, village council venues or other spaces provided by the communities. As the possibility to choose MAG venues was based on the available community resources, this sometimes resulted in the lack of appropriate space and equipment for MAG meetings, which affected participation. There were accounts by the programme to try and remedy this situation, for example by making some funds available to teenagers to rent meeting spaces in private houses at later stages. The availability of funds for ensuring appropriate learning spaces is one of the lessons learned from implementers.

"... in some places we had problems, and in some places, they gave us a room where we studied, in a class when there were no students and we also hanged our charts, but in some other places the MAG location was specific." (IDI 81, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, F)

"Yes, the only problem they had was the lack of a teaching place. Mostly the houses were used for training. It is better if they provide a better place for the next project." (IDI 39, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

4.1.6 Relevance of content of 'New Homes, New Lives' drama for supporting IALA's outcomes

Listening to the radio was not something that generally featured when adolescents were asked about their free time or other activities. Regarding the programme NHNL, one third of the adolescents interviewed reported to have listened to it. This is comparable to the midline evaluation where 15 out of 29 adolescents interviewed during the field mission had reported not listening to the radio at all, and only five had participated in community or MAG radio listening sessions (P. 39, 2019). In the IALA baseline and midline data, the three main channels to learn about rights and entitlements are friends and family (51%), mosque (41%), and TV (20%). Radio is thus not necessarily a popular medium of instruction.

The topics recalled included early marriage, girls' rights such as education and employment, and teachings about behaviour, e.g., problems with lying. Adolescents who listened to the programme found it engaging and informative, and the topics relevant to their lives. They stated that they mostly listened to the radio programme at home, alone, or with family members, and that they discussed the episodes with family and friends. Parents who also reported to listening to the programme found the topics good and were satisfied that their children were listening to them. There was no knowledge among stakeholders interviewed regarding the extent to which the programme was listened to among target audiences or its effects, although it was noted by programme staff that TV is a more appropriate medium than radio for reaching young audiences.

"I felt happy that I learned something from there and my experience was that girls who are under legal age should not get married, because it has harmful consequences." (IDI 6, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

Roughly one third of the interviewees reported to have participated in a community radio activity as well. They reported that in the debates, they discussed underage marriage, children's rights, and life skills, such as goal setting, decision making, and self-confidence. Adolescents who took part showed a sense of self-confidence and empowerment through having been able to participate in this activity, through promoting the topics in this way to their peers, and through asking questions to the experts who participated in panels.

"Our teacher introduced us. We went there, and there were seminars for two days, that in first day we were taught how to ask questions, decrease stress and be confident. At the programme, the topics were underage marriage and hard labour. I have participated several times. In there, we were asking our elders about what we did not know, such as children's rights." (IDI 20, MAG Member, F, Badghis)

"It was regarding gender, children rights, and how long they are considered children, and what are their rights over parents [...]. It felt good. In addition to the questions that were in my mind, I also encountered questions from other students and got familiar with those who were there." (IDI 63, MAG Member, F, Bamyan)

This suggests that though radio may have had only limited utility for listeners, *participants* in the community radio benefitted in terms of developing confidence and communication skills.

4.2 FIDELITY/COHERENCE

4.2.1 Alignment of activities with cultural norms and their local reception

Parents of MAG members interviewed expressed agreement with the content of IALA's activities, which is why they accepted that their children took part in MAGs, although some acknowledged to have been reticent at first. From the interviews with various stakeholders, we conclude that parents in many communities showed resistance toward the MAG groups, particularly at the start of the intervention, either by opposing the formation of the groups or by not allowing their children to join, particularly girls. Thus, in some cases, MAG members needed to be substituted. Achieving parental acceptance was of paramount importance, as adolescents needed their parents' written consent to attend the MAGs. Resistance was lower in cities and higher in smaller villages and remote areas. Mentors mentioned that this early resistance was mostly addressed in time, as parents saw that the courses and activities were teaching the adolescents useful, positive contents, and this prompted more parents to change their approach and even to provide support and encouragement to their children.

"At the beginning, they really disliked the groups but later realized that the issues were very important and were absorbed by the children, and then later they supported them". (IDI 56, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, F)

"When the MAG programme started for the first time, in the first weeks the families were not satisfied, because the results were not apparent. But then, when their sons/daughters shared their knowledge with them, the family got more interested. Not only did they not disagree with their sons or daughters but also, they motivated and encouraged them as well." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

Efforts to sensitise and convince parents of the benefits of the group were also carried out by MAG mentors and NGO implementing staff. In addition, the community-level trainings helped to sensitise parents and community members about the MAGs and in this way lowered the opposition to the activities. It was a key feature that contents were understood to be in line with the teachings of Islam, and thus appropriate to their communities, to achieve a better acceptance.

"In some places they were very cooperative with us and helped us with many of our problems, but in other places they were very opposed. But in general, the opposition was not significant. Because the training had already been provided to them by UNICEF, which had decreased some of our problems". (IDI 81, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, F)

Religious leaders considered that the trainings received on Child Rights in Islam were in line with Islamic law and teachings and therefore expressed satisfaction with the contents received. They reported that they had acquired new knowledge about important topics regarding children's rights and their place in society according to Islam, which included their rights to education, to not be involved in hard labour or early marriage, and children's healthcare.

For community-level trainings and discussions, local and cultural norms were also considered. In Badghis, there were accounts of talks with men in mosques and with women in houses belonging to community members. Topics concerned children's rights, including early marriage, the right to education, and the value of girls. Elders, religious leaders, parents, and other family members joined the discussions. Most interviewees considered that communities had overall positive reactions to the talks and that adults were pleased to learn about children's rights. However, interviewees also mentioned that some families or community members had expressed negative reactions or questioned issues regarding the topics discussed, such as the age of girls for marriage or the reasons for girls to attend school instead of staying home.

"People reacted positively, and they were happy to know about the rights of their daughters." (IDI 13, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"They contacted the members of the council and the elders of the community, and they reacted positively to these talks." (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

"... an illiterate family reacted negatively and said, "Why should a girl study instead of working at home?" (IDI 3, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"Some people reacted negatively, but after a while they realized that studying is a good thing and thought that everyone should study." (IDI 3, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

Religious leaders (RL) emphasized that it was important that programme goals were in line with and did not contradict teachings of Islam. While some community members first felt that the way topics were addressed during community discussions was not in line with their understanding of the Quran, religious leaders underlined that according to their interpretation, IALA goals for awareness raising were aligned with what they preach about Islam.

"Exactly the Prophet of Allah said that getting knowledge is a must for men and women that both should be trained and participate [...]. When the issue was explained with the proof of honourable verses and Hadith, they were convinced". (IDI 35, RL, Badghis, M)

For the future, parents, as well as community and religious leaders suggested additional actions that could be taken, following the path that IALA had started. The suggestions mostly referred to establishing more schools, educational courses, and hiring teachers (potentially those trained and employed through IALA before). This underlines that IALA activities fell under the norms and interests of community members and leaders. Beyond IALA activities, some parents also mentioned the need for improved security and employment:

"In the process, we have specific plans in the council, which are in the field of education, the establishment of schools, and these are the other issues that we are planning, and I hope that we will be able to implement them in the future, and our teenagers' benefit". (IDI 35, RL, Badghis, M)

Beyond IALA activities, some parents also mentioned the need for improved security and employment:

"People want security and employment. My son went to Iran due to unemployment to feed his family. We desire that peace comes in Afghanistan and equal rights should be given to boys and girls and start their education". (IDI 51,, MAG Parent, Bamyán, F)

4.2.2 Reception of trainings for religious leaders

The Child Rights in Islam training aimed to strengthen religious leaders' understanding of children's rights and their importance based on insights from Islam. Leaders were provided with evidence from the Quran and the Prophet's teachings in relation to children's rights and their protection, including contents related to child marriage, child labour, children's right to education, and the prevention of gender discrimination. Trainings were conducted with Mullahs (religious leaders) by The Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs (MoHRA) with the support of UNICEF in the two IALA provinces.

Religious leaders considered the choice of the mosques to carry out the trainings on children's rights in Islam as appropriate, as the trainings discussed issues that concern Islam, and as the mosque plays a key role and reference in Muslim societies. They also deemed this a good location due to its capacity for spreading messages among a wide audience.

The religious leaders who agreed to be interviewed reported being satisfied with the training and its contents. They felt that the trainings were appropriate, as they were according to the teachings of Islam. They reportedly shared their messages with community members in both formal settings (Friday prayers, Madrasa teachings in separate rooms for girls and boys) as well as informal talks. They mentioned that, overall, parents were receptive to the teachings and glad to learn about their children's rights according to Islam, which they were mostly unaware of before.

Overall, the religious leaders interviewed seemed to accept the messages conveyed about adolescents' development and rights, including their right to education and the non-discrimination of girls. One of the topics which seemed to have had a less uniform response was child marriage, as disagreements were cited on this topic in both the midline and endline evaluations, particularly on the appropriate age for girls to get married. In the interviews, some leaders stated that marriage for a girl could be done at the age of puberty, or 15-16 years, while most emphasized having at least the legal age of 18 years for both. Even leaders who mentioned the 15-16 years threshold, still recommended that marriage happens later, for adolescents to be ready and in a better position. This can plausibly be linked to the training's focus on explaining the negative impacts of child marriage. If one distinguishes between child marriage and early marriage, however, all RLs clearly rejected marriage before puberty and had mixed views regarding marriage after puberty. Another issue which seems to have had a less uniform response from religious leaders was decision-making regarding marriage, which some still considered a decision ultimately to be taken by parents, even if in consultation with their children. While they agreed that boys and girls should not be forced to get married but have a say in the decision, interviews with community members reported that parents still take the final decision in most cases.

The themes child marriage and child labour created some resistance in the communities. In terms of child marriage, the issues for the community were: the definition of a child's age (when they are or are not a child), ambiguities present in the religious traditions, for instance parents bringing up the age of Aisha's marriage to the Prophet (9 years old), and the issue of economic necessity which, together with conservatism, drives the practice forward. The perceived parents' responsibility over children's marriage was also a key issue, as this is still a prevalent norm. In terms of child labour, some parents argued that in their poverty-stricken conditions they needed children to work to help sustain the families. In terms of education, resistance was related to parents' economic situation which pushed them to engage their children in work instead of sending them to school. Their reservations against older girls attending school were due to social and gender norms. However, overall messages regarding children's access to education seem to have been better received than others.

Overall, leaders reported feeling confident about addressing community concerns and questions based on the training received. However, they also pointed out that not all community members had changed their views, and that further sensitization work on children's rights was needed. Some behavioural changes and changes in norms are still lagging due to conflicting social influences, such as economic needs and tribal rules, versus child protection and gender equality values.

4.2.3 Comprehensiveness of trainings for influential community members

Trainings for influential community members seemed to have been comprehensive enough in terms of their coverage of children's rights and protection. The community leaders interviewed expressed satisfaction with the trainings and sessions, which were held separately from those for religious leaders. Community leaders stated that they acquired knowledge that they did not have before about children's rights and their place in society. The new knowledge included how to consider and treat children, the protection of children against harmful practices, such as early marriage and child labour, the importance of education, the value of girls, the importance of non-discrimination between boys and girls, and children's health.

"The positive point was that we learned a lot of things in this programme. For example, before that we didn't have information about underage marriage, about the rights of children, but now we know all about the mentioned issues and therefore we understand." (IDI 32, CL, M, Badghis)

"One is, the rights of children in society, what are their rights and what are their values, the second is that early marriage is untimely, the third is the education of adolescents, what kind of education should adolescents receive. These are the three things we learned." (IDI 37, RL, M, Badghis)

There is evidence that leaders substantially increased their awareness about these topics, of which, in their own words, they did not have too much knowledge and understanding before. There is also evidence that this knowledge and awareness has had a positive influence on their views on adolescents and on harmful traditional practices, although this evidence points to less uniform effects than those regarding knowledge. On the one hand, we find several accounts of leaders promoting children's rights in their formal and informal speeches and their interactions with families and community members. This includes anecdotal evidence of interventions to stop underage marriages and to promote school attendance. On the other hand, the changes have not taken place consistently, indicated by leaders' differing views about the appropriate age for marriage and their considerations that parents are ultimately the decision makers in marriage. There were conflicting responses, for example, with some leaders stating that marriage for a girl could be done from an age of 15 or 16, and for boys from an age of 18 years (even though they recommended them to be older), while most emphasized the legal age of 18 years for both. More details are provided in Section 4.4.

4.2.4 Community and religious leaders' use of training contents

There is evidence that community and religious leaders engaged in IALA have used the new knowledge to support adolescent protection in their communities, though the present qualitative study cannot determine the scale of these practices, also because the team faced difficulties in locating religious and community leaders willing to be interviewed at the difficult time when the data collection took place.

Community and religious leaders were recognised by all interviewed stakeholders as having a strong influence in the target areas. Their knowledge sharing activities can thus have a strong multiplier effect. In the interviews, leaders acknowledged the responsibility to share their knowledge, considering their position in society and in the activity of Islamic communities. The leaders interviewed found the IALA's teachings in line with the teachings of Islam, which allowed them to adopt these and share them with their communities. The trainings seem to have been successful in showing how Islam supports children's rights and in encouraging leaders to engage against harmful practices in their community.

"For example, untimely marriage causes a girl and a boy to separate. What other problem arises? According to the Shari'a, they have the right to study, to come to the mosque, or to go to school, to study, to learn. These are the rights they have over their parents. We taught these things to children." (IDI 37, RL, Badghis, M)

"Well, as far as we learned from the training, we passed it onto others and made them aware, for example, of preventing early marriages, which is both mentally and physically defective. Well, sometimes it happens because they are economically poor." (IDI 33, RL, Badghis, M)

The interviews provide evidence that leaders have shared the knowledge they gained about children's rights with adolescents and community members on children's rights in both formal and informal settings. The high amount of dowry and the socio-economic problems it creates were also raised by some leaders. Knowledge has been shared through religious sermons at mosques, sessions at the Madrasas (separate for boys and girls), 'formal' community discussions, and in informal gatherings where topics of child rights were addressed. Religious leaders considered the mosque a good location due to its capacity for spreading messages among a wide audience. The importance of the mosque as a source of learning was also evident in baseline and midline data, according to which respondents identified the three main channels to learn about rights and entitlements as being friends and family (51%), mosque (41%) and TV (20%).

"On Fridays, Mullah Imam would discuss children's rights, the value of girls, and other issues." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"There is no set time and whenever it is available, for example, if there is a party, ceremony, event, or reciting of the Quran; those who have taken the course transfer their information." (IDI 33, RL, Badghis, M)

"A: When we were free, we gathered people and talked about those issues which we learned.

Q: How useful was the learned thing for you?

A: It was very useful. Men didn't know about side effects of early marriage; now they send their children to school and try to teach them about life skills" (IDI 32, CL, Badghis, M)

There is some evidence that in addition to spreading information and knowledge, some community and religious leaders played roles as agents of change themselves by contributing to prevent child marriage and to promote access to education. For example, respondents mentioned that Imams started paying attention to the age of girls and the consents of youth for the marriage to be carried out, and there were accounts of leaders aiming to prevent child marriages by convincing the families of their harmful effects. There are also accounts of leaders talking to families to support adolescents to go to school.

"In most marriage parties, they invite us for the recitation of the ceremony, but if boy and girl are teenagers, we try to prevent the marriage." (IDI 36, RL, Badghis, M)

"Approximately one and a half months ago our men were busy somewhere, and when they came back, they shared information with me. There is a special case that was a family and they wanted to give their daughter to someone, but she was a teenager; we discussed with them and convinced them to cancel this marriage." (IDI 32, CL, Badghis, M)

"If such a case occurred [child marriage], the elders of the community will meet to find a solution for it so that it should not occur. In case, if it is not solved here then they refer to the district, where all the elders of the community and other influential people gather and find a solution for it." (IDI 45, MAG Parent, Bamyan, M)

"Of course, they were in common with clergies and old people of the area and also, they used their advice. For example: if they wanted to return their classmate to school, they had to convince her/his parents with the help of clergies and elders of the village." (IDI 60, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, M)

It should be noted, however, that although evidence for increased knowledge and awareness among religious and community leaders is clear, evidence of systematic activities linked to child protection is less strong and/or points to less uniform effects. Despite the general acceptance of leaders' messaging among community members concerning child marriage, the importance of education, and gender inequality, conflicting social and economic conditions – economic needs, cultural habits, and religious conservatism – were still mentioned as challenges to changing norms.

Religious leaders considered the choice of the mosques to carry out the trainings on children's rights in Islam as appropriate, as the trainings discussed issues that concern Islam, and as the mosque plays a key role and reference in Muslim societies. They also deemed this a good location due to its capacity for spreading messages among a wide audience.

"Especially we talked with mullah imams, because the mosque is the best place for publicity in Muslim societies." (IDI 32, CL, Badghis, M)

4.2.5 Implementation modality and partnerships between UNICEF, implementing NGOs and service providers

The IALA programme was aligned with UNICEF Afghanistan country policy, UNICEF's frameworks on the protection of the rights of the child, national frameworks of child protection and international frameworks including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to address harmful traditional practices and their negative impacts on adolescents through the IALA programme, UNICEF ACO engaged with the MoE, the Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs (MoHRA), the MoIC, the MoLSA, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), the Afghanistan Education Production Organisation (AEPO), the Consortium AKF/WVA, with financial support from the IKEA Foundation. These institutions were involved in different programme components, for which they coordinated periodically with UNICEF and partners, and monitored the activities and visited the programme areas.

Each partner's role and share of responsibility in the programme was considered by stakeholders to be clear and understood by the rest. Memorandums of Understanding were signed at the beginning to this end. AKF and WVA had executive roles, taking care of the implementation of activities according to design and planning, while UNICEF provided technical supervision, financial support and monitoring. UNICEF monitored the programme through internal personnel and also at specific points in time through third-party monitoring.

The partnership between UNICEF and the implementing NGOs benefitted from a long trajectory of previous common work in-country, including the implementation of joint programmes in education, health, nutrition, and other areas. Furthermore, each NGO's expertise in the country and in the programme development areas was highlighted as a strength. This meant that both NGOs were active in each of the regions and had long-standing activities there, which facilitated their knowledge and outreach to the different stakeholders at provincial, district, and village level.

The experience of cooperation was regarded positively by the stakeholders interviewed. Partners met periodically for coordination meetings from the provincial to the local levels, and the overall position is that the different offices (governmental, non-governmental and UNICEF) were getting involved to an appropriate extent in overseeing the implementation and effectiveness of each of the programme activities. In addition to the monthly meetings, additional meetings were held when deemed necessary. The system allowed for the discussion of progress and challenges, providing opportunities to incorporate lessons learned into the implementation. Coordination meetings between stakeholders in the different institutions and the Department of Education were happening periodically, holding monthly meetings where the discussion of progress and challenges took place, and additional meetings as necessary. Cooperation for implementation at the local level was also highly appreciated.

Stakeholders mentioned that local councils were cooperative with the DoE, directorates, and the schools, as several MAG members were students at the local schools.

Some coordination issues were mentioned. For example, the fact that there were many people involved in the programme from the different departments, and this caused that not always the same people would be involved in the meetings, which made it more difficult for communication. Furthermore, monitoring of the programme was complex, and it is not clear how much the information flows were being exchanged between organisations with UNICEF, in particular in relation to villages.

Programme staff considered that it was important to sensitise staff from government departments to raise awareness on adolescents' rights. In fact, the interviewed stakeholders found that all government partners had raised their awareness on children's rights through the IALA interventions. However, after the programme's completion, the political transition to a Taliban-led government has changed the whole government apparatus as well as educational and women's policies. Information related to governmental actions in the area of child protection has thus been unavailable. At the time of the evaluation, the links with government counterparts were still not defined, and in consideration of the extremely unstable situation the evaluation team could not seek access to government authorities/service providers. Thus, the evaluation excluded pillar III, and focused on pillars I and II, adolescents and stakeholders.

4.2.6 Activity completion, divergence in implementation and operational challenges

All stakeholder groups interviewed convened that IALA's implementation did not face major issues in delivering its activities and outputs, with the noted exception of the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted most programme activities in the last quarter. However, several challenges emanating from both the contexts in which the activities operated ('demand' side), as well as from the programme's design and operations ('programmematic' side) had tangible effects on implementation, producing divergencies and operational challenges to be addressed. Some of them have already been discussed in the previous sections.

On the 'demand' side, one of the factors which caused divergence in implementation and challenges were the traditional gender and social norms varying between Bamyan and Badghis and within each province. In some (especially the more remote/rural) areas of both provinces, but especially in Badghis, local norms did not allow for mixed-gender MAGs (as planned) but required gender-segregated groups. This was the case also for community level activities organised in these areas. Social and gender norms created challenges for implementers also because they affected MAG attendance and participation, as well as community's levels of acceptance/resistance to MAG activities and messages. Communities with more resistance needed stronger sensitization work on the part of both adolescents and adults.

Moreover, where the context made attendance more difficult or less engaging for adolescents (whether due to prevailing norms, labour practices, community acceptance, or physical distance to educational infrastructure), this implied more challenges for implementers to retain them and to monitor their activities. Also, as a few members dropped out and needed to be substituted, for example in Badghis, which impacted on the trainings received (e.g., additional refresher trainings). Another factor that produced divergence in implementation and required design changes was illiteracy (see Section 4.1.3). Although all of these factors are related to the context and 'demand' side, they also have a programmematic aspect, as MAG organisation did not sufficiently consider in the design some of these factors which affected implementation, such as the work activities of vulnerable adolescents and the timeline of MAG in consideration of seasonal practices.

Regarding the programme's side, findings indicate that resources provided for operations were overall considered sufficient and available for the whole duration of the activities, although there were issues reported on insufficient funds/resources in some areas which produced challenges. For the case of trainings, arts and sports activities, respondents specifically cited availability of adequate education materials which included manuals for life skills trainings, books, pens, artistic and sports kits, etc.

"...the materials that were useful for us were given from the office. For example, in the artistic committee kits were given and, in the sports committee, they gave equipment. For example, books were also provided by the Education committee. What was needed for us they gave to us." (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, F)

Trainers considered the materials provided easy, instructive, and readily available to teach, for both the trainings and the committee activities. Nevertheless, some stakeholders indicated that there was late delivery of some of the materials for the start of the school year, which was later remedied by planning the delivery in advance so that they would reach the beginning of the next school year. There was also the request to have more visual materials and access to digital aids (and skills), as well as more interactive activities, games, etc. to teach the contents, as these were considered very useful, particularly for illiterate students.

For the case of ALCs, there were mentions of some shortages of human resources, particularly in some areas. This was mentioned by some mentors as well as by some parents, who would have been interested in more educational resources for their out-of-school girls.

"...specified classes had a rule, and the students of the group did not have the ability for doing that. Just in our area there were no teachers but in other areas there were a lot of teachers who were supported financially by the AKF organisation." (IDI 60, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, M)

Resources at community level and community participation also affected implementation, which is linked to both demand and programme design. The availability of community resources and their disposition for IALA activities by the communities were factors which caused divergence and sometimes operational challenges for the organisation of MAGs as well as for the implementation of activities at community level. MAGs originally did not have budgets devoted to the functioning of premises, and stakeholders mentioned challenges in ensuring that some MAGs had places available for meetings, as they depended on the availability of spaces (and the disposition of these) by the community. This implied that some MAGs had regular places to meet, while others may have found this more difficult. Moreover, MAG's community activities depended largely on the groups' possibilities, as these were voluntary. A lack of resources was sometimes mentioned for the implementation of MAG plans and activities at community level, which led to some activities to not be performed.

"Plans that were prepared, a few of them were facilitated and a few were not facilitated on behalf of the organisation. Another problem was lack of budget in performing. And the members of groups were teenagers and did not have financial ability for performing the plan. Lots of their plans were as an idea and remained as an opinion." (IDI 60, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

Community support did not just affect implementation in terms of material resources, but also in terms of support to MAG the development and implementation of MAG activities. Where MAGs were supported by community adults, adolescents found it easier to carry out awareness raising activities and saw their activities more legitimised, which signals the importance of adults' systematic inclusion in any future initiatives.

For the case of community-level activities such as action plans, the limited financing created difficulties to implement ideas presented by communities, when they exceeded the programme's forecasted budget. Delays in development of community action plans were reported in Badghis in comparison to Bamyán, and funding unavailability afterwards made it not feasible to include these plans for Badghis in the programme before its formal end.

Another programmematic aspect which introduced variation in implementation was the fact that MAGs were based around a school and not necessarily a village, with cases where not the whole IALA package was delivered to one village but only particular components. There were villages where only one or two MAG members were based, and where partly no community or religious leader training or community discussion had taken place (or only one of the two had taken place). Thus, this limited the possibilities brought about by the otherwise synergetic approach of IALA activities in each site. For the cases of MAG members who were not part of the MAG school village, participation was more difficult due to physical distance and engagement was therefore affected.

Finally, it should be noted that the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020 further impacted programme implementation, requiring a halt to activities and some further modifications. The lockdown restricted travel, delaying procurement of materials and producing changes to remote communication with and monitoring of beneficiaries. It also implied the need to rethink activities and ways of further utilization of the MAG, for instance, for hygiene awareness and prevention activities. The impact of COVID-19 on programme implementation also meant the suspension of the last radio debate in Bamyán and made it impossible to deliver community action plans in Badghis as per design.

4.2.7 Reliability, accuracy, and consistency of programme monitoring systems

Interviews with stakeholders showed that monitoring plans and mechanisms were in place for each of the implementing organisations to track the different activities organised. Monitoring mechanisms, including forms to be filled in by mentors, were developed for MAGs to ensure that adolescents participated on a regular basis in the meetings and that MAG activities were tracked and recorded by the monitoring professionals. Mentors mentioned receiving periodic visits from the implementing NGOs' offices to check how activities were going. Moreover, peer mentoring guidelines for MAG members also included monitoring forms to track the cascade learning activities. However, the latter were more difficult to implement as adolescents mentioned that not everyone they shared their knowledge with was included in the form. There were also problems with missing, incomplete or non-digitized records, such as a lack of information regarding ALC teachers for Badghis and lists of programme participants in the leaders' trainings only available on paper and only in Dari., which directly affected data collection during the evaluation. This may have been due to the current difficult situation. Yet, monitoring data should have a centrally available backup in the future.

In addition, despite the tracking systems developed and the involvement of various stakeholders in ensuring their functioning, difficulties to provide data to the evaluation team signal that there was still a lack of sharing of disaggregated information of programme implementation with UNICEF to understand the scope of activities within each implementation village. Since MAGs were mostly based around a school and not necessarily a village, some MAGs had members distributed across several villages, which could not be identified based on the school MAG lists that the evaluation team received. In this case, there were villages where only one or two MAG members were based, and where partly no community or religious leader training or community discussion had taken place (or only one of the two had taken place). Thus, there was variation in the degree of implementation, with cases where not the whole package was delivered to one village but only particular components.

4.4 COVERAGE

4.4.1 Reachability and participation of the intended target groups

The MAG interventions were to a large extent able to reach and engage participants from the intended groups. Pre-established selection criteria aimed at the age group of 10 to 19 years, with a gender balance (50% girls, 50% boys) and more out-of-school than in-school children (generally 12 out of 20). The findings show that there was sufficient awareness by teachers and community leaders regarding these criteria, thus helping to largely reach and engage participants with the intended characteristics.

Besides the criteria of minimum and maximum age, gender balance and the proportion of out-of-school children, no other clear criteria for inclusion/exclusion of adolescents in the MAG were mentioned by interviewees. This points to a lack of clarity in the communication of the full criteria for joining MAGs and/or the fact that the criteria were not uniformly applied in MAG formation. Also, it is not clear whether the information about the possibility to join the MAGs was available to all potentially interested adolescents in the schools or villages. Some MAG members described being selected through teachers or headteachers at their school or by community members (e.g., heads of councils), while others noted that they had not heard of the group but were interested to participate when they found out, and therefore joined at a later stage. There were also accounts that the implementers' staff stepped in, for example, to avoid cases where more than one adolescent from the same family was selected. The lack of communication around the selection criteria and the seemingly limited information available about the MAGs may thus have led to selection bias, e.g., more motivated and/or outspoken adolescents being selected for participation.

According to the interviews with programme staff and mentors, there were generally enough in-school and out-of-school adolescents in a village to create a MAG, although where this requirement was not met, the range was expanded to nearby villages. School teachers, headmasters, local councils, and village leaders could be involved in the selection of adolescents according to the predefined criteria. MAG mentors mentioned that in some MAGs more than 20 adolescents were interested in taking part, although this was not possible due to lack of financing. Adolescents were told that they would in any case benefit as a result of cascade learning activities. There was also evidence that during the programme some adolescents dropped out and had to be substituted. Adolescents who joined later said that they wished they would have been there since the beginning of the programme.

The guideline of 12 out-of-school children seems to have been generally followed, although some of the MAGs interviewed had different compositions, including 50% of in and out-of-school children, or also in some cases just a few out of school children when these could not be recruited. The groups were reported to have been split equally in terms of gender, though, as discussed in Section 4.1.2, there were issues regarding the enrolment of girls, particularly at the beginning, as some families had reservations or even objections about this activity.

MAG members and mentors interviewed stated that most adolescents attended the MAGs regularly, with absences being limited to few students. Many mentioned attending MAGs twice a week, per the planned structure, while some reported lower frequencies such as once a week, twice a month or even once a month in some cases. Problems with attendance of at least some members were mentioned for most groups, which reflected adolescents' living conditions described above.

One of the most common issues was limited accessibility and mobility brought by winter, including snow and rain and the impacts of muddy roads. The distances to/from the MAG premises influenced this issue. Particularly, students who lived further away from the MAG centre mentioned these problems and reported attending more regularly in summer than in winter.

While the MAG interventions were able to reach and engage the desired participants, findings from the qualitative study revealed several factors causing differential participation and performance in MAGs: age, gender, literacy, poverty, family support and training methodology/style.

With regard to age, the majority of the participants indicated that older teenagers engaged more with the training contents and grasped them faster than the younger ones. This implied a challenge for mentors to make the teachings understandable and engaging for the different age groups. The influence of the critical factors gender and literacy on participation and performance have been discussed in separate sub-sections (4.1.2, 4.1.3, and 4.3.2).

Poverty and lack of family support were important issues affecting adolescents' attendance and participation in MAGs. Adolescents from poverty-stricken families who needed to work or who were not encouraged by their families to participate had more challenges to engage in the MAGs and take full advantage of these. These conditions included the need to do farm work in the case of boys, which particularly affected their attendance in spring, while girls often had to attend to house chores and other work at home. Lack of parental support particularly affected girls (see Section 4.1.2). Beyond the notion that further support was needed for participants from poverty-stricken families, no specific strategies seem to have been pursued for ensuring the retention of these vulnerable adolescents. There is evidence also of some students no longer attending the MAG (who then needed to be replaced), which is one of the reasons that refreshers of life skills trainings needed to be offered.

With regard to the training methodology/style, the findings reveal that the traditional approach (reading and writing) was beneficial mainly for literate adolescents (the majority of whom were in school), as opposed to illiterate out-of-school adolescents, who could only internalize the contents taught through practical sessions, in the

form of storytelling, role play, games, painting, and drawing. However, the practical sessions were also preferred by literate adolescents, as they found them more engaging.

"Some of those teenagers had family problems, and some of them were disabled so they needed to be encouraged. So, their courage and self-reliance could be increased. And they were taken care of by the boss". (IDI 60, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

4.4.2 Role of gender in participation

The effects of gender on MAG attendance were mixed. Some MAGs stated that boys were more absent than girls, while others noted that girls were more absent due to family issues. Other groups noted no gender-related differences in attendance. In the case of girls, the most common challenge derived from families' lack of support to their participation in the MAGs in the face of prevailing social and gender norms. Adolescents in both provinces recounted that some families had issues with allowing girls to come to the MAGs, which affected attendance, particularly at the beginning of the intervention. There were accounts of girls who had to be substituted as they were not able to join and of girls having difficulties to take part because of social and gender norms. The situation seems to have become better over time, as both some adolescents and mentors invested considerable efforts to convince families to allow their daughters to participate.

"In the beginning, when the course was created, many families did not allow their daughters to stay in the MAG. Finally, we convinced the people of the community, with difficulty." (IDI 30, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

"The girls were interested themselves, but their fathers would not let their daughters. However, this has been resolved later, and an example of this was with a girl [in my group], for whom I talked to her father." (IDI 81, MAG Mentor, F, Bamyán)

On the perceptions of boys' and girls' performance in the trainings and overall learning in the MAGs, results are mixed. Some mentors mentioned that girls and boys developed the skills equally, with no significant differences between them, while other mentors reported that girls had performed better than boys in their groups – which is remarkable, given girls' more difficult starting positions, with a tendency of lower levels of confidence. One respondent linked this to the fact that they were older, and older adolescents were reported to have achieved an overall better understanding. Girls were generally found to show higher levels of participation and interest.

"At first girls were very low on courage and could not share their opinion; near the end of the programme girls also were better." (IDI 60, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

"There is nothing without challenge and difficulties. When we went to Yakawlang the students had such low courage that they couldn't say their names or say something in front of the class. After we trained them, we saw lots of changes at them, of course not one hundred percent but it was good, even there was no difference between girls and boys" (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, F)

"According to my observations and those of most of my colleagues, the participation of girls was much higher than boys. Girls are very interested in studying and doing these things." (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

The higher levels of motivation and participation of girls was linked to their tendency to be out of school and have less access to educational opportunities, which the MAG could now offer to them.

"They have never given a chance to the girls. And those groups were the first place where girls could participate a lot. The girls were absent less than boys and participated more than boys." (IDI 60, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

"Most of the girls were more involved and active, because they were from the illiterate class. These girls were more interested in these trainings, because they were deprived of schools and did not participate in any other courses in the field of education, but the boys showed less interest because they had previously participated in educational centres." (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

MAG members who considered that there were no differences in terms of participation only described differences regarding boys' and girls' preferences for different activities, such as leadership and sports for boys and culture and expression for girls.

"Interest was the same. There was no difference. But there are some activities that girls are interested in and some activities that boys are interested in, for example in culture committee girls are interested and in sport committee boys are interested." (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, F)

Some adolescents mentioned feelings of shame or shyness to speak in the presence of the opposite sex, but the overall experience in the mixed gender groups seems to have been positive for both, and the structure of the MAG seems to have facilitated participation. Mentors and MAG members reported overall that boys' and girls' voices were equally heard in the context of the MAG and decision-making.

4.4.3 Inclusiveness of vulnerable groups

The findings reveal that to a large extent, the interventions fostered inclusiveness of boys and girls and out-of-school children in MAG member selection and participation through their core selection criteria. However, socio-economic conditions of families in the target areas, parental support, and learning and integration difficulties linked to illiteracy were key conditions affecting participation and retention of the most vulnerable. Moreover, there was no criteria reported by interviewees for selection of adolescents with disability.

Evidence indicates that community profiling was done with support from local councils and village leaders, and thereafter vulnerable adolescents were selected and integrated into MAGs. Furthermore, the MAGs also deliberately looked for vulnerable adolescents who were out of school to join and enjoy the benefits of MAGs.

"During the survey, first I got the profile of the whole village. Our next thing was meeting for the selection of members. We tried to give a role to those who were vulnerable, which should be included in the committees and groups." (KII 2, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

MAGs reached the target of having a significant percentage of out-of-school children, many of which were illiterate. As discussed in detail in Section 4.1.3, these groups faced challenges and needed more support than in-school children. Programme staff thus made adjustments to meet the needs of these vulnerable groups by incorporating more visual and interactive teaching methods, by offering activities for literacy teaching, and by requesting the support of in-school MAG members. Yet, mentors noted consistently that illiterate adolescents showed less engagement with the topics and that it was more difficult to retain them throughout the programme. The mix of literate and illiterate children also proved challenging for their teaching activities.

Poverty and lack of family support were also important issues affecting adolescents' attendance and participation in MAGs. Regarding poverty and adolescents' need to work, no other specific strategies were outlined for ensuring the retention of this group of vulnerable adolescents. The lack of parental support, which particularly affected the participation of girls, was addressed by considerable efforts to convince families to allow their children to participate (see Section 4.4.2).

Besides the criteria of age (10-19 years old), gender (50% girls, 50% boys) and out-of-school children (preferably 12 out of 20), there were no additional criteria for the inclusion/exclusion of adolescents. It is also not clear whether the information regarding the possibility to join the MAGs was available to all potentially interested adolescents (see Section 4.4.1). The lack of further selection criteria, the potentially lacking spread of information about the MAGs to all potentially interested adolescents, and the selection through teachers, headteachers, and community members/leaders may have led to selection bias, for example, in favour of more motivated and/or outspoken adolescents being selected for participation.

Additional selection criteria beyond age, gender, and out-of-school children, such as the socio-economic status of families and disability, combined with specific support strategies for the most vulnerable, more systematic engagement of parents to foster their support (e.g., educational programmes directed at parents), and a stronger focus on activities for illiterate children in programme design could foster the participation and retention of the most vulnerable groups.

4.4.4 Parents' support and reception of MAGs and community discussions

Parental support was found to be a key factor in adolescents' engagement with MAGs, with evidence showing that adolescents who were supported by their families were more likely to perform better and take more advantage of the MAGs than those whose parents were not involved or encouraging. The evaluation found that there was some resistance towards MAG groups from parents in many communities, especially at the start of the intervention. There were parents who opposed the groups or did not authorize their children to join. Parental permission was a precondition for participation. Thereby, gender likely played a role in intra-family decision making. Although our data is not conclusive on this aspect, we note that four of the fathers interviewed mentioned that they had 'allowed' their children to study and take part in the MAG (with one of them mentioning both parents), while only one mother explicitly mentioned this dimension of 'allowing' her daughter to take part. Furthermore, the discussions about overall decision making in the household revealed that parents, and more frequently fathers and elders, took precedence over adolescents.

There is evidence from all sets of stakeholders that, over time, parents, regardless of gender, became more supportive of the groups and their children's participation in them, as they realised that their children's learning outcomes were positive for them as a result of the sensitization efforts of programme staff and IALA activities. The local concerns about the activities in the MAGs translated into having observers or groups of observers from the community who were present at MAG meetings and sessions. This 'observer' or 'supervisory' role was mentioned more frequently by fathers than mothers interviewed.

"I did not agree at first, but when I saw that my son had changed a lot, I was very happy with the lessons." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"When I monitored this programme and saw that it was very useful and self-contained. I monitored them and first found that they were learning knowledge and literacy, setting in the community and how to talk with people." (IDI 42, MAG Parent, Bamyan, F)

"Yes, I participated; I was supervising the courses that how are they studying and what kinds of activities are they doing." (IDI 7, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

Mentors mentioned that most parents were collaborative, and sometimes even joined the groups' activities, although they also reported that there was little cooperation in some areas, particularly in smaller villages. Mentors and programme staff also pointed out that without parental support, activities would not have been possible.

"Yes, most of them, especially the girls' parents, collaborated with us. The girls' parents were coming once a week and monitored. In addition, sometimes they participated with us." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"No programme could be implemented without support. For example, 1,500 members participated in a literacy programme that had the consent of the community and their parents. Otherwise, no one would have participated. The enrolment of 1,200 people in the school was also done with the consent of the parents. [...] the members of the group knew that they had the support of their parents, and if they had not supported them, nothing would have happened." (KII 1, Programme staff, Bamyán, M)

The majority of parents interviewed (both fathers and mothers) were aware of the activities that their children took part in at MAGs, with only a few parents who did not know about them. Many also reported to have participated sometimes by attending meetings to understand what was being discussed and what their children were learning in those spaces.

Parental knowledge about the MAG was a factor in their participation, as shown by the fact that those who were not knowledgeable did not take part, but it was not a sole defining factor. Also, parental support of MAGs is not exclusively linked to high levels of knowledge of MAG activities, as it seemed sufficient for parents to perceive that the activities were valuable in teaching their children to be supportive. This is shown by cases where parents were not very informed but still were supportive of their children when they had the perception that valuable knowledge was being provided to them. All parents expressed satisfaction that their children were learning new and useful things and that this had positive impacts on them, thus placing a high value on education – even when this had not been the case prior to the MAGs. Some fathers highlighted a communal dimension in their value of MAGs, mentioning that the programme allowed adolescents to learn something that would be useful/for the betterment of their communities.

Although parental support was not exclusively linked to their knowledge of MAGs, increased parental knowledge about the activities and communication with their children generally favoured greater engagement, as parents got to know about upcoming activities by their children, such as trainings or discussions; had the opportunity to get involved by looking/appreciating their work; or discussed with their teachers their learning, thus offering a more supportive learning environment for their children. Furthermore, most parents who talked with their children about MAG activities, had taken part at least once or sometimes in either MAGs or community discussions, while those who did not discuss, had not done so. Yet, this intergenerational communication was not a sole defining factor in parental involvement.

As per design, MAGs were still perceived as something that the adolescents did, and thus parents were not considered a target audience with a specific involvement expected. Therefore, their participation seems to have been based mostly on individual possibilities, time availability, dedication, and perceived relevance of this involvement. Parents also do not seem to have been specifically targeted as 'multipliers', and only in very few cases, there were descriptions of them having discussed the topics of IALA with community members (e.g., neighbours, other families) to spread the knowledge or promote changes.

4.4.5 Support of community and religious leaders to adolescents for MAG and community discussions

In addition to parents, members of the village councils and leaders, as well as school staff were involved and supporting the MAG activities.

Reports from mentors suggest that at the beginning there was resistance by community leaders and members to accept adolescents' activities, considering their role in society, but this situation got better over time as they could see that activities had good outcomes and benefits. Moreover, they mentioned that the trainings provided to leaders were useful to help solve their problems of acceptance.

"Sure, they met with Imams, village members, and elders. If they had a problem, at first, the people of the society didn't accept them, but after seeing the activities of the teenagers, the people and the society asked for help from Multiple Adolescent Groups' group". (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, F)

"In some places they were very cooperative with us and helped us with many of our problems, but in other places they were very opposed. But in general, the opposition was not significant. Because the training had already been provided to them by UNICEF, which had decreased some of our problems." (IDI 81, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

Supportive community and religious leaders took part in MAGs in various ways: as monitors or supervisors of the activities, to ensure learning outcomes were relevant, appropriate and achieved; as referential people providing guidance, information and discussing with children about their rights; and as facilitators for MAG activities and problem resolution.

"We talked to the teenagers three to four times, and our discussions were about the Islamic beliefs, to learn healthy ethics and to prevent them from doing hard labours." (IDI 34, CL, Badghis, M)

"We met with them once a week and asked about their own rights and asked them what they learned. Always we observed them." (IDI 32, CL, Badghis, M)

There is evidence that adolescents reached out to religious and community leaders to discuss children's rights, and that the former were supported by the latter to consult about or address problems, but the evidence is not uniform across MAGs. Almost half of the adolescents interviewed mentioned to have talked to leaders about some issue of concern, most times in the context of the MAGs; of these, seven were girls. The rest of the adolescents interviewed reported to not have reached out to leaders about any issues or problems and stated that they go to their families in these cases. Adolescents who discussed issues with religious and community leaders mentioned

mostly the topics of early marriage, access to education, and harmful practices such as high dowry, and in some cases also other topics such as healthcare and environment.

"Yes, several seminars were held, all members of the community came to participate, and community leaders from the council chairman and their chairman came to our classrooms and closely monitored the project, where they were learning new things". (IDI 38, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"A: Yes, I shared with the Imam about underage marriage, and he also shared it with people.

Q: How did you approach them, how did you address them and what was their reaction to you?

A: Their response was positive and he supported me. This is the only way to reach our goals." (IDI 63, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

Through the MAGs, the life-skill trainings, the support from leaders and the interactions during community discussions, many MAG members experienced improved relationships between them and other community members, including mutual respect, higher familiarity with each other and comfort to freely express their opinions. This improved relationship with their communities were further backed by parents and MAG mentors interviewed, who highlighted adolescents' improved behaviour and respect.

"My relationship with community become cordial, and I participated in each discussion held in the community and expressed my opinion. [...] At the moment, my relationship with the community is very good. This relationship has increased since I joined MAG and my knowledge has increased. After that, my value in the community has increased". (IDI 2, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

"Yes, the changes have taken place, for example, the observance of mutual respect. [...] Mutual respect increased in the community". (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

"Yes, it is different. Before, I was unfamiliar with my community, but now people know me, and I also know them". (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

4.4.6 Participation of community members in Community Discussions

Results from the interviews show that community discussions took place in almost all areas targeted by IALA. Only a few MAG members mentioned that community meetings had not been organised in their location (IDI 01, MAG Member, Badghis, F).

While there was no clear pattern regarding the frequency of the meetings, they were either held periodically once per month, sometimes three times in total, partly for two days in a row, or based on necessity that religious or community leaders usually identified. Rooms in the villages were made available for these activities. Discussions were sometimes held at mosques, while in other cases other places in the community were found, such as houses belonging to council members.

"It continued for three days, and we invited most of the families which had children to learn about the rights and needs of children and how they can make facilities for the education of them. It was held in mosques" (IDI 32, CL, Badghis, M)

"Yes, there was a programme that was held in the mosque for two days and all members of our community participated in it". (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

When interviewed about IALA activities at community level, parents mentioned not only discussions that were organised as separate events by IALA, but also informal discussions as well as formal teachings by Imams integrating the relevant topics, e.g., children rights and gender equality during prayers on Fridays. In this way, it is clear that conversations about the topics taught by IALA were held at community level in different formats and occasions, not just for the case of organised discussions.

"There is no set time and whenever it is available, for example, if there is any party, ceremony, event or reciting the Quran; those who have taken the course transfer their information in those places". (IDI 33, RL, Badghis, M)

"Currently, the situation is good. It's done due to the necessity of the people. If there is a problem for the people, they gather in the mosque and each of us expresses his views among the people". (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

Regarding participation in community discussions, there were no reports that certain community members were not allowed to attend. On the contrary, both fathers and mothers confirmed to have taken part in the meetings, partly as families, partly individually, as well as adolescents themselves, sometimes alongside with elders and other persons holding leadership positions.

"There were other mothers, there were members of the community, there were leaders, there were Imams and clerics as well". (IDI 3, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

For some discussions, they were divided into groups, however, it was usual for men and women to talk separately:

"Yes, it was done for girls and boys separately, and in some cases for older women, it was done by IALA". (IDI 34, MAG CL, Badghis, M)

"We trained men in a mosque and my assistant, who is a woman, trained women in their houses. We talked about life skills, early marriage, and children rights." (IDI 32, CL, M, Badghis)

Generally, community members seemed interested in the discussions, mentioned that these had been useful for their communities, and reported to have appreciated receiving knowledge about their children's rights, which

they had not been aware of before. Parents, mentors, and leaders mentioned that the level of awareness and understanding of community members was overall raised on issues such as child marriage, the importance of education, and the rights of girls. The fact that children's rights were transmitted according to Islam teachings made the communities more receptive, as they considered something that was relevant to their contexts and not something that, for example, 'came from abroad'.

"In general, these discussions made the people of our society more aware and more literate. People became aware of the rights of their daughters, understood what rights their daughters have, what they should do, and what they should not do. (IDI 3, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"It was greatly useful. Now people are accepting girls' and women's rights. Also tell them to go to school and get an education and now most of them are going to school." (IDI 53, MAG Parent, Bamyán, M)

Resistance was, however, experienced by some community members, although in every case, interviewees acknowledged that this was not the majority of the participants, referring only to 'some' or 'a few' families that had qualms with the messages transmitted. These included doubts on allowing girls' education instead of them staying home, resistance to not allowing early marriage when parents have entitlements over their children, and discussions on child labour. Generally, interviewees associated more resistance with families who were illiterate and/or of low economic means, but this could not be objectively verified by the qualitative study, as most parents in the sample had positive reactions despite their illiteracy. In our sample, mixed community reactions were reported in various villages in Badghis (Baghlar zad Morad, Dahan Baghak, Darwish Mohammadi, Khoda Amadaha) as well as in Saigan and Yakawlang districts in Bamyán.

"Some of them showed negative reactions but some of them were happy because they were aware of their daughters' rights." (IDI 17, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"Yes, not all of them have changed their way of thinking, but many of these people understood that early marriage is not a good thing and their children's rights should be taken into consideration." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

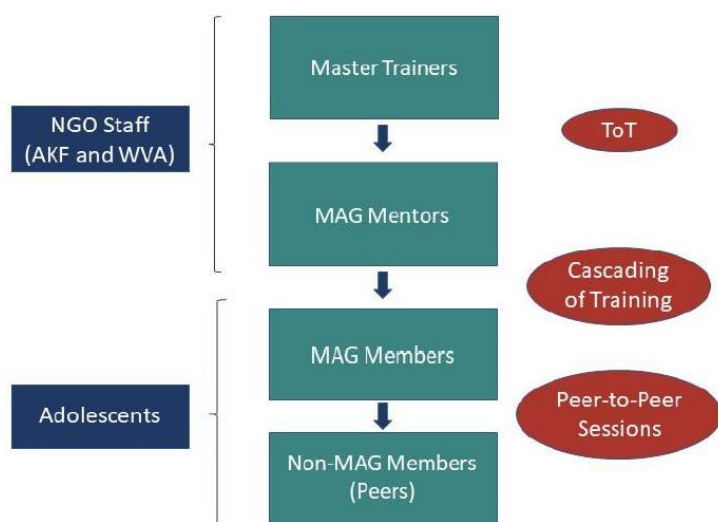
Other challenges were found to get community members to participate in trainings and discussions, which were the lack of incentives like financial incentives, transport costs or food were given at these occasions.

"Yes, some people don't listen well and do not realize its importance. Some of them were not attending at all. More importantly, most of them paid attention to the financial aspect of the programmes, which we did not have anything to give them. That is why their attention was low and more towards the financial aspect of the programmes. In total, these were the problems which I faced". (IDI 77, RL, Bamyán, F)

Out of those who did not show interest, MAG members observed that some regretted their lack of interest later, once they saw how adolescents improved their skills and benefited from the activities.

4.5 EFFECTIVENESS

4.5.1 Transfer of knowledge to adolescents and building of life skills



Overall, MAG members interviewed reported to have gained new knowledge and skills that allowed them to make positive changes in their lives and to promote change through knowledge sharing and awareness raising. The LST taught adolescents about topics that they did not have awareness of or knowledge about before. Adolescents reported to not have discussed the topics of life skills trainings prior to the involvement in the MAGs, as they did not have information about them, and lacked the skills and confidence to do this.

"My experience by this training goes to the learning of life skill and setting of goals on which previously I had no idea and now I am able to implement these skills in my life." (IDI 2, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

"I had no information about self-esteem before and had even not heard its name. The other thing on which I had no information was conflict. After joining MAG, I have learned these topics, which are new for me." (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

In terms of the skills gained through the LST, adolescents highlighted the improvement of their decision-making, and goal setting, strengthened self-confidence, and improved expression of emotions, particularly stress

management, anger management, and the learning of empathy. They highlighted that the knowledge and skills gained were relevant to their lives and had applied at least some of them after MAGs. All adolescent respondents reported to have improved their communication and interpersonal relationship skills, with most expressing that this had happened both within and outside their homes. They mentioned that they had learned how to talk to others, to express their feelings and their problems, and they had generally improved their interpersonal relationships. Moreover, they expressed greater confidence in themselves, for example to speak out in class to other peers and to get involved in community outreach activities.

"I felt good, because we went to learn something and we had the courage to go in front of the classes, we stood in front of the class, in front of all of my classmates and talked about an issue, for example, decision-making for increasing our courage, so both our behaviour and our courage increased." (IDI 26, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

"We did not participate before the youth committee and did not understand many things. After participation, now we became aware of many things. When you meet someone in the community; be nice, talk well. Now, for example, if my companion has a problem, and she always fights with me, I will take her intention away from me, I should not accompany her in the fight. If they wanted to go to war with you, you have to treat them well." (IDI 50, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

Parents and mentors backed these findings on adolescents' acquisition of communication skills, expressing that adolescents' behaviour with their families and community had improved since joining the MAG, and frequently mentioned an improved ability to establish relationships with others. Moreover, in most cases they confirmed that adolescents were talking more inside the home and sharing their problems with them.

"Her politeness and education increased, and she had a good behaviour with other girls." (IDI 11, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"Before joining the group, the teenagers had very little communication, but after joining this group, they can communicate well with everyone, for example, between committee members and so on." (IDI 65, MAG Parent, Bamyán, M)

"Yes, he has changed a lot in the past, he could not tell us about his problems, but when the stress is gone, he can express his feelings well." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"At first, he did not have good relationships outside, but after the MAG he became very good, he made good friends." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, M, Badghis)

"It was about that how to make decisions and building trust between each other. In addition, it was really focused on making friends and on how to be a social person." (IDI 21, MAG Member, F, Badghis)

Adolescents also mentioned to have improved the expression of their emotions, highlighting in particular the management of stress, of anger, and the learning of empathy.

"We did not know how to sympathize or empathize with someone's in sorrow and the teacher were always talking about self confidence that we do not knew. After this class we knew what these are, and we put it into practice." (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"Controlling the anger, we liked them very much, because we did not understood things like that [...] We benefited a lot from them. Many of us controlled their anger. (IDI 43, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

Decision-making and goal setting is another skillset highlighted by interviewed adolescents after their participation in MAGs. They reported to have acquired knowledge as well as practical experience on how to make decisions and how to set goals, and they underscored the importance that this has brought to their lives. Their expressions pointed to a clear sense of empowerment. Parents and MAG mentors also identified an improvement in decision making by the adolescents.

"A: Yes, of course. For instance, the decision making; it really helped me to solve very big problems. Q: If you could choose the most important thing you learned from the life skills training, what would it be? A: Being a goal-oriented person. We need to have certain goals in our life to change our life." (IDI 21, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"It was much better than before, in the beginning, he could not make good decisions, but now he is very good at making decisions." (IDI 22, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"Yes, she participated in life skill training and learned to decide in her life, and she was good in her lessons." (IDI 25, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

In addition, adolescents showed strengthened feelings of confidence in themselves after undergoing the trainings and experience of the MAGs. This included trusting their own capabilities, being able to make decisions for themselves, as well as speaking up in their groups and talking to others outside of these (family and community members). Adult roles including parents and MAG mentors confirmed this finding, considering that children had clearly more courage than before in their lives, and they saw this through their interaction with their peers, family and community members, as well as in their abilities to express themselves and make decisions.

"Self-confidence is very important. Since we saw the workshops, my self-confidence has become very strong, and we highly recommended this to our other friends." (IDI 46, MAG Member, Bamyán, M)

"[...] after that, our studying level has increased and when I wanted to make a decision, I believed in myself. I was sure that I can do this." (IDI 18, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"In the past, a child could not talk properly or make decisions about their life, but now their courage has increased, they can make good decisions and tell the family about their problems." (IDI 39, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"Yes, there have been many changes in my life. I did not understand many issues. I could not defend my rights. After this programme, I defend from my rights. I continued my studies and prevented early marriages." (IDI 20, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

The knowledge and skills developed through the LST seems to have helped adolescents to face challenges identified at the beginning of the programme, such as access to education and the harmful effects of child marriage. As a result of their increased confidence as well as their decision-making and goal-setting skills, adolescents felt encouraged about making decisions in their lives and seeking to achieve goals, which has motivated them for instance to return to school, to pay more attention to their studies, to convince their parents to allow them to do so, and to motivate their peers that this was a worthwhile goal. Aware of their rights and empowered to set goals and make decisions, adolescents sensitised their parents to support their education, with the belief that this could enable them to have better opportunities, including working in well-regarded professions with a stable income in the future (e.g., becoming doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers) and getting involved in the improvement of their own communities.

"... my family did not understand, after I told them about children's rights, they understood that they should send my sister and younger brother to school for studying." (IDI 26, MAG Member, M, Badghis)

"...[the] MAG causes that they find information about education and training and life skills. The education and training caused some students to go and recognize the people that they were not going to school with, and they taught them and gave them motivation." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, M, Badghis)

Thus, the new knowledge and skills acquired seem to have prompted an overall sense of empowerment among adolescents, which has changed relations with their parents (Section 4.5.3) and facilitated their active engagement to promote awareness and changes in their communities (Section 4.5.4).

4.5.2 Adolescents' communication within peers and the cascade learning approach

Adolescents felt that sharing their knowledge with others was their duty, as a main point of the group was awareness, according to what they had been instructed in the MAGs, and they described to have worked both inside and outside of school to share their knowledge with others. This finding coincides with the midline evaluation, where MAG members were found to have communicated with various types of community members in and out of school, including both younger and older in-school students, out-of-school adolescents, family members, friends, and neighbours. As the summative evaluation, unlike the midline, did not cover non-MAG members in the sampling, the effectiveness of adolescents' peer-to-peer learning practices cannot be ascertained, as all data regarding this approach can only be considered from the perspectives of the knowledge multipliers.

Adolescents did not report the exact numbers of people with whom they had shared the MAG learning outcomes within their communities (of the required 15-20 people per group monthly). Yet, the interviews clearly indicate that all but one of the adolescents had reached out to their peers to discuss the MAG topics, especially to their friends and classmates, and that most had also discussed one or more topics with their families or other community members (e.g., neighbours). Although in many cases adolescents seemed to have mentored others in their immediate surroundings (friends, classmates, family), there are also accounts of MAG members who became very active in knowledge sharing, making sure to expand their mentoring practice to people in the village. There were many accounts of adolescents taking part in informal campaigns to raise awareness of the issues learnt at the MAGs, e.g., going door-to-door to families to increase awareness about the importance of education. Adolescents also promoted their peers to follow the same process and share the knowledge with others to expand the chain.

"I talk to my other friends, and they talk about anger and other topics and the topics that were discussed in the group I shared with them. I shared good topics with them, and they were very happy." (IDI 54, MAG Member, M, Bamyayn)

"A: Yes, I always discussed with my village girls about our lessons and other materials in our village.

Q: What was your discussion about?

A: We have discussed about confidence, stress and making decisions." (IDI 10, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"I have contacted to 10 to 15 teenagers including my cousins, sisters and my students about this course and telling them about this course [...] I told them that do not accept underage marriages which is detrimental for your future, be courageous and you should study if you want to have a bright future." (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

Most mentoring exchanges seemed to have happened in informal settings, including gatherings, meetings, in their houses, or even during agricultural activities. In addition, some more 'formal' and systematic mentoring experiences were described, including MAG members sharing contents in class at school and carrying out organised campaigns for awareness of certain key topics, such as early marriage or education. This finding is also in line with the results of the midline evaluation, which found that mentoring sessions took place in a variety of contexts, including on the way to school, on the way to collect water, at religious gatherings, in the mosque, and at home.

"Yes, I taught something that I learned in MAG to my friends, school classmates, and at home for my family. Every day that I am free, with 5 or 6 children, we discuss education, sports, making decisions, having goals." (IDI 12, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"Yes, I discussed it more at MAG and it is very important. We talked about the bad consequences of child marriage and gave information to our classmates. We campaigned outside of MAG." (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"Our plan was that sir, how to pass on what we have learned here to others. We made great efforts to fulfil our responsibilities. We usually worked inside and outside of the school as a result people changed a lot. We publicized and people listened to us." (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

Overall, the MAG members interviewed reported feeling confident and comfortable with transferring their new knowledge on life skills to their peers. In most cases, they expressed having had positive experiences with mentoring, with peers being receptive to their efforts and feeling happy about the contents they learned. Only a few adolescents in our sample reported not feeling too comfortable about the experience (e.g., due to others making jokes or not pay attention to what they taught), and one male interviewee said they had not shared their MAG learnings with others. In general, adolescents considered that the mentoring experience was useful, in the sense that their peers could grasp the concepts they had shared, and many mentioned that through reaching out to other peers they had also inspired to continue their education.

Adolescents mostly felt that they had gained enough knowledge to teach others, and when they run into issues, they reported they usually consulted their MAG mentors. Regarding challenges for mentoring, adolescents mentioned the need to go over the contents more than once with their peers to make sure they understood them, as this was sometimes difficult, in particular child protection contents. Mentoring was also reported to be particularly challenging for them in the case of illiterate adolescents, for whom learning was more difficult. Furthermore, some MAG members perceived some distrust from their peers and communities towards the activities, although this usually got better over time, as people became sensitized with the MAGs' work and the positive changes in adolescents. MAG members mentioned to not always have utilized the monitoring forms when they taught. Another challenge related to the spaces for mentoring. Limitations on girls' mobility, for example, created constraints for mentoring, as they could not go to other villages or move around in theirs with the same freedom as boys. They hence tried to talk to others inside the schools, or when they met in other social contexts.

Most adolescents interviewed reported to have spread their knowledge about the harmful effects of child marriage by discussing it with their peers and their families.

"Yes, I was gathering my peers. I was telling them about early marriage. 'Do not get married until your education is over and continue your education', and also it was about setting goals and how to have a goal in our life." (IDI 23, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

Adolescents also informed others about the value of education. MAG participants tended to inspire their peers, who had not participated in the MAGs, to go to school. In some cases, adolescents also involved community and religious leaders to overcome the challenges of families who refused to send their children to school.

"For example, there were families that did not let their children to go to school, we (me and my family) talked to them and told them about children rights and motivated them to let their children to go to school. Then, our speeches affected them very well. Not only did they let their children to go to school but also they motivated them to study for a bright and better future." (IDI 21, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

Despite challenges faced by MAG members when sharing their knowledge, it appears that cascade learning was feasible in the sense that they felt motivated to carry it through and showed to have practiced it in their daily lives, particularly with peers and family members. It is clear that some adolescents were more active than others in this work, depending on their level of outspokenness and confidence to talk to others about the topics, as well as on their possibilities/limitations to carry it out based on their contexts.

One limitation of the present study, as mentioned, is that it did not include non-MAG adolescents. Therefore, the quality of the knowledge delivery of the LST and its reception among non-MAG members cannot be analysed in comparison with the midline's results, which showed a somewhat limited level of awareness of MAG among non-MAG members (35% and 43% of both adolescents and parents in the intervention villages in Badghis and Bamyán respectively). From the stakeholders' accounts in the qualitative interviews, it seems that adolescents' sharing in line with the cascade learning approach may not have been as systematic as core trainings and that it was more selective in terms of contents. For example, in terms of the LST training, adolescents seemed to have shared what was most important for them and what they remembered best, with some focusing on decision making and others on confidence, anger management, or empathy. Moreover, there were differences in focus according to the sub-committee activities that members were part of, e.g., in terms of education or sports. This said, the interviews suggest that: i) the core contents regarding harmful effects of child marriage, importance of education, and at least some of the key life skills learned were shared; ii) the mentoring model was useful to assert their knowledge, confidence, and sense of empowerment, thus having its own positive outcome for MAG members themselves. For learning outcomes to be potentiated in a future intervention, more extensive MAG groups or other models for knowledge sharing can be pivoted to ensure that contents reach all eligible adolescents within a village.

Adolescents reported having learned to better relate to each other and establish relationships with peers and the community overall through their trainings and MAG participation. Adolescents appear to have gained trust in themselves and in their relationships with their peers and in many cases mentioned that they considered they could help to solve not just their own but also their friends' problems through consultation with them. However, their family (mostly parents, but also siblings) was seen as the first point of reference in case of problems.

4.5.3 Adolescents' communication within their families

The programme seems to have contributed to improving intergenerational communication among MAG members' families. Most adolescents and parents interviewed discussed topics of the MAGs at home, including early marriage and its harmful effects, children rights, and life skills. They did so with varying degrees of depth. In some families, they only discussed what they learned or what they had done on life skills or self-expression training, while in others they shared the various topics addressed at MAGs. Most adolescents interviewed in both provinces reported to have spread and discussed their knowledge about child marriage and education with their peers (friends, school classmates, out of school children) and their families (parents, siblings, relatives from their extended family). This is aligned with the results of the midline evaluation, where adolescents reported sharing the contents of the LST with their families and mentioned gaining the confidence and ability to speak to their parents about issues of child marriage, education, and other harmful practices, without significant differences by gender.

"Before joining the MAG group with my daughter, our information about life skills was very low and it also had no value for me. Now I know its value and have good information about how important life skills are for her and other teenagers." (IDI 66, MAG Parent, M, Bamyan)

"Yes, I explained issues which they didn't understand, for example early marriage. I explained to them what to do and what not to do." (IDI 4, MAG Member, M, Badghis)

"Yes, I talked about everything. For example, to have mutual respect for each other. I also talked about early marriages, decision making and conflict solving." (IDI 23, MAG Member, M, Badghis)

Very few parents interviewed (three out of the 24) were completely unaware of their children's activities in the MAGs, stating that the adolescents kept to themselves. Even in these cases where parents were not involved in the process nor in the learning outcomes managed by their children, they were reportedly glad to see them studying and learning, as they placed a good value on this. Overall, adolescents seem to have been sharing the contents of MAGs and LSTs, which in many cases they had not discussed before. The midline evaluation yielded similar results, showing an increase in the (frequency of) discussion of these topics. In addition, from both parents and MAG members' accounts, we draw that in most cases, adolescents were talking more at home after taking part in the MAG, and that they were sharing their problems more with their parents.

"Yes, he has changed a lot in the past, he could not tell us about his problems, but when the stress is gone, he can express his feelings well." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, M, Badghis)

"Before joining the teenager group, they did not come to me and did not discuss guides any problems or concerns with me and their family members. Previously, it was considered a shame" (IDI 53, MAG Parent, M, Bamyan)

According to participants' accounts (adolescents, parents, and mentors), most families' reactions to adolescents sharing the contents of the MAGs were positive, even though there were different levels of resistance. Some parents, especially in smaller or more remote villages, still opposed the contents. The resistance or opposition seems to have lessened over time, however, as parents and community members realized that their children were gaining knowledge that they considered important or useful, and as they saw first-hand positive changes in their children as they took part in the MAGs.

"At first, the reaction of the society was not good, for example, they were telling that you are young, why do you want to do these things, but they got better as time passed by." (IDI 81, MAG Mentor, F, Bamyan)

"In the past, they did not support their children very well but after a while when they found out about the course, they supported their children [...] at the end when they saw that these are good topics for themselves and their families and has a positive result, then they supported them." (IDI 30, MAG Mentor, F, Badghis)

After IALA, spaces seem to have opened up in terms of decision making for adolescents, though the extent of these spaces differ. In line with the qualitative results from the midline evaluation, the summative evaluation found that parents still feature as the main decision-makers in families (and most frequently the fathers). Yet, there is some evidence of changes in family dynamics in line with the midline's quantitative findings, showing an increase in parents' consideration of their children's views: most of the adolescents interviewed reported to now have the confidence to reach out to their families in matters that concern them and mentioned that they were voicing their opinions, were consulted by their families, and/or took part in decisions, even if the final decision is the parents'. At the same time, many parents expressed that they allowed their children to make decisions about their lives (including daily life and education). This enlarged space had practical consequences for adolescents, as in many cases it led to changes regarding their lives, such as attending school, with adolescents convincing their parents to study. A major concern for parents was that their children should make the right decisions, and parental approaches in their daily life decision-making differed from having a consultative role (giving advice, guidance) to a more active one, including approving or disapproving of decisions made.

"I let my daughter make any decision even if she decides to go abroad for studying. I will let her go. I trust my daughter so much and I know she makes the right decision." (IDI 25, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"If our child decides to share with us, I consider the current situation, that if our child's decision is good, we also agree with him, if it is bad, I do not agree." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

These effects of adolescents feeling more confident to voice their opinions and of parents increasingly taking their children's opinion into consideration, can be seen as an achievement towards fulfilling the Convention on the Rights of the Child by respecting the child's views.

4.5.4 Adolescent communication with leaders, policymakers, and authorities

Most adolescents interviewed mentioned to talk with their peers and family if they have a problem. There is evidence of many adolescents also communicating problems to community and religious leaders, although this is less common and not uniformly found in the qualitative sample. Around half of the adolescents interviewed (seven of which were girls) reported to have spoken to someone with authority in their communities about problems or concerns for adolescents, although many of these experiences were in the context of the group-organised activities by MAGs, such as campaigns. Thanks to their participation in MAGs, adolescents reported feeling more empowered in daily life and eager to promote change with respect to harmful traditions and norms in their communities, which sometimes included talking to authority figures. Respondents declining any communication solely came from Bamyan province in our sample (and mostly from Shibar).

"I discussed the early marriage with him [religious leader] and asked that he should convey this message to everyone." (IDI 43, MAG Member, F, Bamyan)

"Yes, for example cleaning of the community; we talked to head of our village about cleaning of our village." (IDI 4, MAG Member, M, Badghis)

"Yes, it has changed completely. In the beginning, if they [adolescents] had any problems, they could not tell anyone, they could not have the courage, but after the MAG, their courage increased. They participated in social discussions". (IDI 38, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

While most respondents communicated the topics of early marriage and the importance of education to various actors in general, several adolescents, parents, and few mentors and community leaders further confirmed that MAG participants had also reached out to authorities, particularly regarding early marriage. In the reported cases, authorities mostly included religious leaders, community leaders, and council members. In these cases, MAG members reported to seek advice from leaders for solving problems (IDI 23, MAG Member, Badghis, M) and for general guidance on different issues (IDI 46, MAG Member, Bamyan, M) as this MAG member stated:

"Yes, I have talked to Mullah-Imam, elders, chairman of council. If I ever had a problem or concern to discuss". (IDI 48, MAG Member, Bamyan, F)

Some MAG members mentioned to have discussed about early marriage with religious and community leaders not only to prevent specific cases, but also to generally support awareness-raising:

"Yes, we have discussed early marriage with Imam or elders of the community". (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyan, F).

"About my decision, that you meant the decision maker of the community, I discussed the early marriage with him that should convey this message to everyone. [...] His reaction was supportive and accept it to convey this to community and people". (IDI 43, MAG Member, Bamyan F)

Religious and community leaders confirmed this:

"Yes, they [adolescents] refer to us. For example, I said before if there was a problem or an issue, they refer to the elders and the members of the council, so the elders were cooperating in the performances, or they were helping as much as they could to solve the problems". (IDI 35, RL, Badghis, M)

"Yes, they [adolescents] report us about problems of society like early marriages and discussed about them". (IDI 32, CL, Badghis, M).

Other MAG members emphasized that they especially consult the Imam (more than other leaders) (IDI 54, MAG member, Bamyan, M). Few added that that they talked to organisations to address issues related to poverty:

"Yes, I talked with many organisations that village people are poor specifically our family is poor, and we do not have many things". (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

MAG mentors added that adolescents did not only reach out to leaders for advice, but that leaders simultaneously also asked for assistance from MAGs and appreciated the communication with them:

"Yes, the children were doing this with the mullahs and heads of council. They were discussing, and the members of the community were happy for that". (IDI 39, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"Sure, they met with Imams, village people, and tribal leaders. If they had a problem, at first, the people of the society didn't accept them, but after seeing the activities of the teenagers, the people and the society asked for help from Multiple Adolescent Groups' group". (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, F)

"They contacted the members of the council and the elders of the tribe, and they reacted positively to these talks". (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

The evaluation did not find evidence of adolescents' communication with policy makers or other types of governmental actors from the discussions held. This finding is in line with the midline evaluation, which found that adolescents resorted to family members, followed by the head of the local shura, and religious leaders as their primary contact point for complaints, not child protection service providers. None of the adolescents interviewed at endline mentioned child protection services when asked about a potential reference point or contact person for problems or complaints affecting them, naming instead again their parents first (in most cases), or village leaders/representatives (in a few cases). With regard to the latter, local councils were mentioned to be involved along with village leaders in the prevention of early marriages or to promote someone's access to school.

"We had a family whose 10-year-old daughters were prevented from going to school. Fortunately, with the cooperation of the people and the local council, we were able to convince their father to join the school." (IDI 63, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

"They did a lot of work in this field and even went to those houses and held campaigns in this section. On several occasions they reported, and our staff went with the district governor to those areas. For example, in Ahangaran, we had a case of underage marriage there. They went there and delayed the marriage and the family promised they would get married by reaching the legal age, which is 18 years." (KII 2, Programme staff, Bamyān, M)

Although communication between adolescents and policy makers cannot be shown, there is evidence that a few parents of MAG members got involved with education offices and councils. Furthermore, programme staff have reached out to government counterparts when cases were reported by MAG members.

4.5.5 Community mobilisation for increased awareness on child protection issues and consensus building regarding social norms

Adolescents described various types of community outreach activities that they were involved in to raise awareness about children's rights and prevent harmful practices in their communities. One of the key actions was the sharing of the knowledge they gained to peers, parents, and other community members. As mentioned, all adolescents reported having reached out to their peers to talk about the topics learned at the MAGs, including life skills, child marriage, and education, while most also expressed to have reached out as well to their families and to other community members. Another action performed by MAG members involved talking to families of adolescents who were not sending their children to school to convince them to do so, as well as to prevent child marriages in cases where families were supporting this practice. Adolescents described doing this individually or as part of wider campaigns organised with their MAGs. This type of cases constituted anecdotal evidence in the midline evaluation. The summative evaluation yielded more reports in the sample about actions taken to reach families on the mentioned topics in both provinces. Some adolescents mentioned that they had also reached out to elders and heads of councils about these issues, although this was not the majority of interviewees.

"Yes, I talked about the fact that one of the issues is girls and boys going to school. I had information about those who did not go to school and went there and talked to their parents. Fortunately, some of them send their children to school. Now, I felt good that I did some work for the community which is good for youth improvement". (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

"There was a meeting in the group, and it was said how we should do things. And it was decided that a literacy group should go to the area and the women should study. We assign two members from the group to work as volunteer teachers. One was me". (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

"Q: What do you remember from these discussions?"

A: I have good and bad memories. My good memory is that we persuaded several families to send their children to school, but my bad memory is that some families do not even allow us to see their daughter at school". (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

Furthermore, adolescents described the organisation of social actions to improve their communities, such as literacy and cleaning campaigns, tree planting, building toilets, health awareness (e.g., during COVID-19), and cultural and sports activities to promote children's rights (e.g., community theatre productions about early marriage, sports competitions in football and volleyball featuring boys and girls). More details on this are available under Section 4.4.6.

"For example, our very good school and group; we held planting campaigns and even each of them planted 4 to 5 plants by themselves to encourage people to plant 1000 trees in the area in a day. And there were cleaning campaigns to collect all rubbish. Another one was going home to home with parents who did not allow them to go to school, we talked to them and convinced them to allow their children to go to school." (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, Bamyān, F)

"Some people were involved in garbage collection in Yakawlang and other groups were so active that they were able to build 50 toilets for people who did not have a toilet". (IDI 56, MAG Mentor, F)

"It [theatre we played] was about early marriage and held in a village so that people should get aware and know about the harms of it". (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyān, F)

According to adult stakeholders, MAG members showed stronger community involvement than before joining the MAG. Mentors and programme staff also acknowledged that adolescents had faced difficulties in their community outreach activities, particularly at the beginning, when they faced more community resistance, as there was less knowledge and understanding about their activities and less legitimacy to them. Community members did not understand and/or opposed adolescents reaching out to discuss these topics. However, this changed over time through sensitization and awareness work. In fact, many adolescents interviewed described feeling an improvement in their status and respect of their communities towards them after participation in the MAGs. There is also some evidence of adolescents being invited to community discussions.

"My relationship with society got stronger. As, we taught life skills to society our relationship was much stronger than that in the past". (IDI 21, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"In the first place, the same kind that is not given a chance in the societies of Afghanistan and the suggestions made by them are not considered, and if it is taken into account, it is very rare. At first, they did not believe in teenagers,

and we asked them to let them know what they are doing. Even some of the next members attended the elders' meetings, which was remarkable". (KII 1, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

Yet, despite positive changes, adolescents' outreach remains limited in view of their role in society. Even though respect for adolescents has improved as a result of IALA, and spaces have opened up for them in terms of decision making – as confirmed by various adult stakeholders, their capacity is still limited as they are not considered as main decision makers in their homes and in their societies.

Outside of the MAGs and the community trainings and discussions, there is limited evidence of systematic community actions taken in our qualitative sample. The community mobilisations promoted through MAGs appear to have been the strongest community actions taken. There is evidence of actions being taken by religious or community leaders to raise awareness, prevent some child marriages, or promote children to go to school (as described in the section dedicated to leaders). Beyond this, the qualitative data does not provide profound evidence of communities systematically engaging in concrete awareness actions beyond IALA initiated initiatives. Yet, there are some reports of those who have taken part in community discussions, to have reached out to other community members like neighbours on an individual case by case basis, and some reports of occasional discussions (at the mosques or informally) regarding problems raised at community level. There is also a case reported of the child protection committee continuing to operate.

Community discussions focused on the promotion of equal rights for boys and girls, the prevention of early marriage, and child protection in general, as parents and mentors confirmed. According to parents, mentors, and leaders, these were very helpful to increase community members' awareness of children's rights, which had been very limited before.

"We had workshops, we had gender workshops, we had children's rights workshops at the centre and district level, and we even gave children's rights workshops in all districts". (IDI 57, MAG Mentor, F)

"After the MAG, the community has really changed. Because every activity which was done, was conveyed by the people of that place and this chain continued very well and the people were informing each other". (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"They were so happy that they said that we regret the violence that we had used against our youth and children, we know these methods were wrong', and in the case of restoring children's and girls' rights and preventing early marriages, we even see one or two cases where people who have plans to change the society, they went into the village, intervene and prevent underage marriages and forced marriages." (KII 2, Programme staff, Badghis)

With regard to community mobilisation, not only adolescents themselves, but also parents participating in IALA activities and involved leaders actively supported the raising of awareness on topics that they learnt or got trained about through IALA. Council chairmen asked MAG members about challenges for instance, and religious leaders made sure to stay informed about the programme activities and topics in order to be able to provide assistance in addressing any problems, like cases of early marriages, or if members requested assistance to talk to families about their children's schooling.

Moreover, it should be noted that a certain level of increased awareness and changes to social norms seems to have spread and established on a public level through the holistic targeting of different groups (adolescents, their parents, community and religious leaders) that IALA employed. Many parents and several MAG mentors confirmed to have observed changed attitudes and behaviour in the whole community around them, like reduced dowry prices, increased parental approval to send not only boys but also girls to school, together with increased appreciation of literacy, and wider awareness about risks deriving from early marriages, such as higher likelihood of divorce and vulnerable conditions for adolescents.

"In general, these discussions made the people of our society more aware and more literate. People became aware of the rights of their daughters, understood what rights their daughters have, what they should do, and what they should not do". (IDI 3, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"Yes, there have been many changes in people realising that underage marriages are very harmful. And they said that they should marry their daughters at the legal age. [...] In the past, people were preventing their girls from going to school, but now they are not prevented from doing so, except for a few families". (IDI 7, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"Yes, the mindset of the people has changed. Understanding that they should not marry their children at young ages should not violate their rights. [...] The girls of our village became literate. People increased the rights of girls. Early marriages disappeared from the village". (IDI 9, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"Few people said that education is good for boys, but when they learned about their children's rights, they realized that education is for both. [...] In the past, people's awareness was low, but now there is a lot of public awareness". (IDI 22, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"Right now, the situation is better than in the past, and our people's awareness has increased". (IDI 11, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

Despite evidence that the target communities have reached better awareness of children's rights through the combination of IALA's activities, there is also evidence that not all community members have changed their views and behaviours, particularly in areas further away from provincial centres and with more rural or traditional livelihoods.

Thus, findings on the effects on social norms are mixed. Although parents and leaders interviewed reported to be against child marriage, there were mixed responses in terms of the extent of parents' influence over decision making about marriage, as well as some differences in terms of what constituted the acceptable ages for marriage. While parents interviewed reported that children should have a say, views varied from youth having the decision-making power, to (most commonly) youth making the decision in consultation with parents, while some parents and leaders mentioned that this decision is still ultimately the parents' (for more information on child marriage, see Section 4.4.9). There is also less evidence about changes of other practices, such as girl-for-girl exchanges (Alishani) and high dowry, which are considered to be still happening. Furthermore, mixed results on respondents' views on the activities which are deemed acceptable for boys and for girls shows less change in this regard. Many respondents referred to activities not acceptable for girls, working outside the home, doing sports, exercising in open areas, and studying in far-away locations. Moreover, conflicting views on who are the decision makers on marriage were found.

4.5.6 Contribution of IALA to adolescent empowerment, disaggregated by gender

IALA contributed to adolescents' empowerment and participation in a variety of ways. We will analyse the results through four domains⁹: i) sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-efficacy; ii) being taken seriously (perception of respect and encouragement to participate); iii) making decisions; and iv) public and civic engagement.

Findings from the qualitative study suggest that participation in IALA has contributed to increasing (i) adolescents' sense of self-worth, including self-esteem, confidence, aspirations to goals, abilities to speak out and challenge rights' violations, and their overall sense of personal well-being. The majority of adolescents interviewed showed strengthened confidence in themselves after taking part in the MAGs, including trust in their own capabilities -both in their intellectual capacities such as setting goals and making decisions, as well as in their social abilities to interact with others and make friends-

"Self-confidence is very important. Since we had the workshops, my self-confidence has become very strong" (IDI 46, MAG Member, M, Bamyan)

"At first it was difficult. Teacher's encouragement increased my confidence and then I felt comfortable with myself." (IDI 6, MAG Member, F, Badghis)

"The changes were that in the past we were studying but not much; after that our studying level has increased and when I wanted to make a decision, I believed in myself. I was sure that I can do this." (IDI 18, MAG Member, F, Badghis)

As a result of their increased confidence as well as their decision-making and goal-setting skills learned through the LST and MAGs overall, adolescents have felt encouraged to make decisions in their lives and seek to achieve goals. This has motivated them for instance to return to school or pay more attention to their studies. The new skills developed, the increased confidence in their own capabilities and the sense of empowerment experienced, motivated adolescents to pursue education as well as to convince their parents to allow them to do so and to motivate their peers that this was a worthwhile goal.

This leads to the second domain (ii), where there is evidence that adolescents felt an increase in the respect that communities have towards them and feel more encouraged to participate meaningfully in their groups and in their communities than they did before taking part in IALA. Adolescents reported to practically not have discussed the topics of MAGs prior to the involvement in these, as they did not have information about them, neither the skills nor confidence to do this. Even though there is still resistance in communities regarding adolescents' role in society and limitations to their decision-making possibilities, parents, mentors and leaders expressed that adolescents have a better relationship with their communities than they did before and that they are better considered and listened to. This is particularly in contrast with the beginning of the intervention, when adults felt great distrust for adolescents' activities and the 'usefulness' of their role in society.

"At first, they were very sceptical that young people might be able to be useful, but later their presences in society and their own functions in society satisfied them. Many cases which were before against human values, due to the presence of teenagers, people didn't have the courage to do them in the community". (IDI 82, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, M)

"If I had not joined the MAG, my life would have remained the same, nothing would have changed in my life and I would not have had a good value in society, but now my life has changed a lot and I have a special value in society." (IDI 2, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

"Yes, they [adolescents] could express their ideas and people were listening to them." (IDI 25, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

Aware of their rights and empowered to set goals and make decisions, adolescents sensitised their parents to support their education, with the belief that this could enable them to have better opportunities, including working in well-regarded professions with a stable income in the future (e.g., becoming doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, etc.) and getting involved in the improvement of their own communities.

⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/media/59006/file> (p.16)

In terms of the third domain (iii), decision making power, the study finds mixed results. Over half of the adolescents interviewed highlighted decision-making as a new skillset they had acquired, including both knowledge and practical experience on how to make decisions and establish goals. They also underscored the importance that these new skills have brought to their lives. In addition, there is some evidence of changes in family dynamics, with most of the adolescents interviewed reporting to now having the confidence to reach out to their families in matters that concern them, and in voicing their opinions, being consulted by their families and/or taking part in decisions, even if the final decision is the parents'. At the same time, many parents expressed that they allowed their children to make decisions about their lives (including daily life and education). This enlarged space had practical consequences for adolescents, as in many cases it led to changes regarding some aspect of their lives, such as attending school, with adolescents convincing their parents to study. In this sense, IALA seems to have opened up spaces in terms of decision making for adolescents.

However, it should be noted that the extent of that space differs. Firstly, parents still feature as the main decision-makers in families (and most frequently the father). A major concern for parents was that their children should make the right decisions, and parental approaches in daily life decision-making differed from having a consultative role (giving advice, guidance) to a more active one, including approving or disapproving of decisions made. In terms of marriage, all parents interviewed acknowledged early marriage as a harmful practice, stating that there should not be any forced marriages and that consent should be given from all parties, with almost all setting the acceptable age for marriage over 18 years old and usually over 20 years. Some parents mentioned that girls and boys are the decision-makers, while others considered the parents to have a key role in this decision. Most considered that marriage is a decision taken together in consultation between parents and adolescents. However, some parents still believed that the decision was ultimately theirs, as guardians of their children and their future. This 'partial' change in decision making was acknowledged in the midline evaluation. The endline conveys that some space opened up for adolescents' role in decision making after taking part in IALA, but unlike the midline evaluation, it found that child marriage was disapproved of by all parents interviewed. However, barriers due to conservatism and economic necessity were still found in the target communities (more in Section 4.4.9).

In the fourth domain (iv) of public and civic engagement, the summative evaluation found that adolescents have a stronger sense of social justice, rights, and wrongs in terms of rights and their protection, which has created encouragement for them to engage with their peers, families and communities to promote changes to the practices they consider harmful or detrimental. Adolescents' increased confidence facilitated their involvement in community outreach actions, including sharing knowledge of the topics learned in the MAGs and participating in awareness raising activities in their areas to encourage social change.

[If MAGs had not happened] "I would not be in the place where I am now. I might have low self-esteem, would not dare to teach others, and help the community to get an education." (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"Yes, there have been many changes in my life. I did not understand many issues. I could not defend my rights. After this programme, I defend my rights. I continued my studies and prevented early marriages." (IDI 20, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

Adolescents have carried out various actions in this direction, including sensitization work with peers and their families about the harms of child marriage and the importance of education; some also talking to community or religious leaders (almost half of adolescents interviewed); and the organisation of social actions and campaigns in their communities. One of the key actions practiced by adolescents was the sharing of the knowledge they gained to peers, parents and other community members. All adolescents mentioned to have reached out to their peers to talk about the topics learned at the MAGs, including life skills, child marriage and education, while most also reported to have reached out as well to their families and to other community members. Another action performed by MAG members involved talking to families of adolescents who were not sending their children to school to convince them to do so, as well as to prevent child marriages in cases where families were supporting this practice. Adolescents described doing this individually or as part of wider campaigns organised with their MAGs. Some adolescents mentioned that they had also reached out to elders and heads of councils about these issues, but this was not reported by the majority of interviewees. In addition, adolescents described the organisation of social actions to improve their communities, such as literacy campaigns, cleaning and tree planting in their villages, building toilets, health awareness (e.g., during COVID-19), and cultural and sports activities to promote children's rights, including community theatre productions about early marriage and access to school mentioned in Bamyán, and sports competitions in football and volleyball).

"One of our activities was to bring a literacy course. During the festivities, most of the activities were from our group, and we also played in the theatre. In the calligraphy and drawing fields, we held competitions in the holy month of Ramadan." (IDI 64, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"It was a very interesting theatre and its goal was to send girls to school, and we were able to achieve more success in that theatre [...] Speaking is a thing that we go to a group when we talk, it is in the minds of children, but after a while, it is forgotten, but theatre is an image that is created in the minds of children and stays in their minds for a long time and there are many messages to be taken from it." (IDI 54, MAG Member, Bamyán, M)

"...we supported them and provided them with equipment, and we had very big girl's competitions in Bamyán province that came to the stadium, and even other teams came from the villages and played volleyball, especially girls. These were the activities the group did." (IDI 82, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

Many boys and girls interviewed recalled addressing the topic of sports at the MAGs. Some mentioned increasing their awareness about the importance of sports for health and reported to have participated in newly formed teams of football and volleyball at their schools, which also held competitions.

"Yes, one of our discussions which is a memory for me was sports, what we discussed in the sports committee: to do sports every day during school break. I always exercised here. That is all we all had during the school break." (IDI 43, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"Yes, in any case, we must raise our knowledge, whether it is information or sports. These are skills that are important for a better life." (IDI 63, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

For girls, this participation in sports was a breakthrough, as sports was considered 'taboo' and not a socially acceptable activity. Accounts from respondents point to the work of the sports committees of the MAGs in this regard, not just to organise the activities but also to overcome communities' reactions. Holding sports competitions where girls participated was recognised as a success by various stakeholders. Participation of girls in these events was, however, lower than boys', and this also varied according to locations and their customs. For example, there were lower levels of participation in Kahmard and Saighan areas in Bamyán. Moreover, it should also be noted that the attitude towards sports was clearly still ambivalent in the target communities where we carried out the interviews (more so than other issues addressed by IALA), as key informants mentioned many communities' reticence, and some adolescents still reported that sports or certain types of outdoor activities were not appropriate for girls.

"Football is good for boys but bad for girls in our area. More sports topics are not allowed for girls in our area." (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"Yes, in the sports sector, for example, girls cannot play football. On the one hand, there is no field and its conditions are unsuitable, especially for girls." (IDI 63, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

Key considerations for girls' empowerment

Girls and boys taking part in the MAGs had different starting points in terms of their confidence and skills. This is partly since many girls were illiterate or out of school, while more boys were in school, which was a factor in their feelings of confidence and sense of self to participate. Girls were also more held back due to economic and cultural reasons, which translated into them having difficulties to go to school or drop out altogether because of early marriages or norms that found it inadequate for them to continue studying, especially when becoming older.

While some interviewees considered that there were no differences between boys' and girls' participation and learning outcomes in the MAGs, there was a consensus among various stakeholder groups (adolescents, mentors, KIIs) that overall girls participated more actively than boys and showed higher interest in MAG activities. As a result, interviewees considered that girls either achieved the same level of empowerment and capitalisation on learning outcomes as boys, or an even stronger one.

"When we went to Yakawlang, the students had so little confidence that they couldn't say their names or say something in front of the class. After we trained them, we saw lots of changes in them, of course not one hundred percent but it was good, even there was no difference between girls and boys" (IDI 62, MAG Mentor, F, Bamyán)

"Yes, especially most of the girls adapted the activities that we teach them well in their lives. In such things, girls always performed better at this training." (IDI 28, MAG Mentor, F, Badghis)

The reason for girls' heightened motivation and participation was seen in their tendency to be out of school and have less access to educational opportunities, hence appreciating the MAGs more. One respondent related it to the fact that in their group, girls were older, and older teenagers performed better in general. Boys were generally in school, although boys from vulnerable families suffered setbacks to education due to their involvement in work (e.g., farming, herding).

Girls' empowerment was constrained due to their difficulties to access higher education and to stay in school. This is due to a combination of still prevailing social and gender norms, economic constraints, and structural issues. Due to prevalent social and gender norms that discourage their education, girls are more likely to not be allowed to go to school or, if they attend, are more likely to leave school early, due to child marriages and families' lower value attributed to the education of girls. The latter is related to the understanding that girls should stay within the home sphere and to norms that disapprove of older girls attending school. Economic constraints also play a part, as girls are required to carry out household chores, and in case of limited possibilities of families, boys are preferred over girls to attend school. In addition, there are structural problems that create further limitations to girls' empowerment, such as limited access to schools in their areas, with longer distances preventing girls from attending due to cultural norms (a culture of limited mobility, of not being outside far from the house) and security concerns, particularly in villages away from provincial centres. Parents interviewed mentioned that there is also a lack of courses for girls in their areas.

"... some families don't allow their daughters to go to school, they say that going to school at high ages is not allowed religiously." (IDI 13, MAG Parent, F, Badghis)

"Yes, most girls graduate from 12th grade, and they are no longer allowed to get an education." (IDI 77, RL, F, Bamyán)

"...a few people because of their bad customs and rituals, say that our daughter has grown up and there is no needs for her to study." (IDI 7, MAG Parent, M, Badghis)

"Only poverty can be an obstacle and a challenge for some. In our society, there are a small number of families that differentiate between boys and girls. They allow boys but do not allow girls to study." (IDI 57, MAG Member, F, Bamyan)

"It is better than before, but there is no course for our daughter or daughter to study. They suffer from a lack of courses." (IDI 3, MAG Parent, F, Badghis)

Furthermore, there is less evidence of change of other social and gender norms, particularly those related to the value of girls and the roles of girls and boys in society. These norms have clear impacts on girls' possibilities for empowerment and development. Differences in the treatment of boys and girls are still palpable in communities, as per respondents' experiences, in terms of boys' being better valued than girls, having more freedom in the social sphere, and being able to do activities that are not allowed for girls. Prevalent community views thus limit girls' activities and spheres of action, with activities such as working outside the home, doing sports, or exercising in open areas, and studying in far-away areas, deemed acceptable for boys but not for girls.

"There were many differences, for example, boys could easily enter the MAG, work, or go from one place to another or visit other groups, but most of the girls were not allowed to do so." (IDI 81, MAG Mentor, Bamyan, F)

"Yes, there are so many things in our society that are good for boys and bad for girls. For instance, working outside is good for boys and it is bad for girls. In addition, sports are good for boys but not good for girls. Moreover, going to the market and other places is good for men but bad for women.

Q: Who says whether these things are good or not and for whom?

A: My parents, they always teach that what is good and what is bad." (IDI 21, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"Boys get more attention in society because they have an income, but girls just work in the house". (IDI 32, CL, Badghis, M)

"Perhaps this way of thinking goes back to the past period of ignorance. If there is a boy or a girl in a family, the parents differentiate between them. The difference exists in the society in which we work, and this is where the discrimination come from." (IDI 79, RL, Bamyan, F)

Moreover, even though stakeholders convene on the advancements in awareness raising in the themes of child marriage and the importance of education, there is less evidence of change of other traditional practices such as girl-for-girl exchanges (Alishani) and high dowry amounts, which are considered to still be happening, and which are highly detrimental to girls' empowerment.

"Yes, poverty, unemployment, high Alishani [exchanging girl for girl], and high amount of dowry are all things which cause problems for teenagers." (IDI 7, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"Yes, dowry and Alishani are also common in our region, while Alishani should not be done." (IDI 33, RL, Badghis, M)

Despite adolescents' clear advancements as agents of change in their communities, and evidence that many members in their communities reached better awareness of children's rights and were acting in consequence (e.g., parents allowing children to go to school), there is also evidence that not all community members have changed their views and behaviours, and that some continue to practice child marriage, child labour and other harmful practices. Respondents emphasized the need to continue to promote awareness among communities about the harms that child marriage can create for girls and boys, and the importance of all children to continue their education. The social position of adolescents in the community and societal pressures, restrict adolescents' ability to promote change within their communities, underlining the necessity for a holistic approach which targets parents and community members systematically to ensure wider and sustained impacts.

4.5.7 Variations in MAG effectiveness across contexts and time

As discussed in detail in Section 4.3, the reachability and participation of adolescents in the MAGs was affected by a range of factors, including socio-cultural norms, parents' attitudes and levels of support, families' economic conditions (affecting the extent of child labour), geographic location and educational infrastructure. This translates into varying levels of effectiveness of the MAGs across contexts – and over time, as some of these factors, such as parents' attitudes, (could be) changed in the course of the programme.

In addition, literacy affected MAG's effectiveness. Illiterate (mostly out-of-school) adolescents found it more difficult to take up teaching contents and were more difficult to be both engaged and retained in the MAGs (see Section 4.1.3). Illiterate children also posed challenges for cascade learning, as MAG members considered it was more difficult to teach them.

Spatial variations of these factors seem to imply spatial variations in effectiveness. For example, traditional gender and social norms and poverty, which had negative effects on participation and communities' acceptance of IALA messaging, are more pronounced in rural areas further away from provincial centres. In some areas of Bamyan and Badghis, communities showed higher levels of resistance to changing traditional gender and social norms, restricting girls' school attendance, adolescents' rights to voice their opinions, and overall views about children's rights and place in society.

“... in some places, such as Kahmard, Saighan, and Ghandak, these places have less support, especially for girls, and of course there are differences from the point of view of custom that prevails in those areas.” (KII 3, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

“In some places we do not allow girls up to grade 6, but in other places they allow up to grade 12”. (IDI 34, CL, Badghis, M)

“... if you live in Badghis, or in other places, someone who is 15 or 10 years old will not be allowed to talk. The traditional system that we and you have said that my father or my grandfather or brother is here, how can we talk? And the same as the society tells them to leave and doesn't care about them.” (KII 3, Programme staff, Badghis, M)

“Yes, of course, the differences were based on the fact that in some areas, some teenagers were more supported by the family and shined more and more and were abler and absorbed the content of IALA programme, and in some places and in some cases, those who have social, family and poverty problems were attracted less.” (KII 3, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

In addition, educational infrastructure affected effectiveness, as proximity or distance to MAGs/schools influenced the attendance and engagement of MAG participants. Those living further away had to deal with accessibility issues linked to distance, bad weather, and cultural limitations to mobility.

Many of these factors are interlinked and have a geographic dimension, with the more rural and more remote areas, which exhibit more pre-existing challenges, and which thus would have been most in need of the programme's interventions (e.g., poverty was frequently linked to child marriage), showing a tendency to lower levels of programme effectiveness, compared to less remote regions.

4.5.8 Contribution of ALCs to education of adolescents

Adolescents' access to education remains limited in some areas, due to the lack of schools with higher classes, particularly for girls. Shortages of teachers were also mentioned as a challenge. Furthermore, many schools were closed during the period of the evaluation, and girls were not allowed to attend classes until further notice since the takeover of the Taliban.

ALCs were a solution put in place through the MoE for students who had not been able to continue their education. They were usually placed where schools were far away or out of reach for students, and for older students to get back on track on their studies. The modality of ALCs allowed students to cover two classes in one year to compensate for the lost time and was designed to be linked to the public school system to have adolescents re-instated in the standard system afterwards.

“ALC classes were usually held for those who dropped out of school and did not even expect that one day it would be convenient for them to return to school. It was a very useful method for most of them and this programme is important for those who have not learned any lessons. These classes were good because they can study two classes in one year and in 3 to 4 years, they can see that they have studied at the same level.” (KII 1, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

UNICEF set up ALCs in the target communities, which allowed a few out-of-school children to enrol. UNICEF provided training workshops for ALC teachers as well as educational materials. ALCs were not the focus of this evaluation, as the priority was to bring out those areas/components where clear links to IALA's achievement of goals were found. There were also limitations to identify potential ALC teachers for interviewees, as explained in the background section. Yet, three interviews could be conducted with ALC teachers, which provided insights to understand the situation of these centres and their perspectives in the overall context of the IALA programme. No ALC teachers were available for interviews in Badghis, and the implementers informed the field teams that there were currently no ALCs operating there.

The ALC teachers interviewed in Bamyan noted that these centres had been operating, but that there were challenges, some of which had already been identified in the midline evaluation. One of them was the difficulty of reaching 10 students to form an ALC, particularly in remote, mountainous areas with low accessibility. Another challenge was the lack of female teachers in some areas, which impeded the formation of more ALCs, and which also impacts students' possibility of continuing their education afterwards. Provision of materials was considered good by two of the three teachers, but one of them mentioned that there was a lack of books. Positive aspects of the ALC training mentioned by respondents were the flexibility of the ALC model of schooling for out-of-school children, the quality of classes, the practical nature of the materials for students to engage with, and the regularity of the classes, including the fact that these were taught uninterruptedly also during the wintertime. The fact that achievements could be seen in a short period of time as a result of this 'condensed' teaching model was also mentioned as a positive outcome.

Attendance of students was considered good by the three teachers interviewed, and interest of adolescents strong. In the cases of the ALCs interviewed, all participants were girls, which were usually the majority and the main target of the programmes, as they are the ones who are more likely to drop out of school. Yet, there were challenges related to local practices affecting attendance, as in the case of one the ALCs, where four students dropped out after getting married. One of the teachers mentioned reaching out to parents to try to convince them of the importance of education for their girls and to allow them to attend class.

Most of the MAG adolescents and parents interviewed were not aware of the ALCs, and for those who were, only one adolescent had taken part. Therefore, no clear linkages could be identified. One parent interviewed

mentioned that they would have been interested in having their children participate in an ALC, but none was available in their area (a village in Shibar).

4.5.9 Overall achievement of IALA's goals

The findings show that IALA has overall achieved its outputs and contributed to the achievement of its two intended outcomes. It has been most successful in terms of adolescent empowerment, while there is still considerable room for improvement in social norms. An in-depth analysis of the programme's performance in this regard is provided through the Process Tracing approach in Section 5 of this report.

Interviews with all stakeholder groups consistently revealed that they were satisfied with IALA's achievements.

First of all, beneficiaries convened that IALA had made adolescents and community members aware of children's rights, an insight which they did not have before and which they found important and relevant to their lives. This included awareness regarding child marriage and its harms, the importance of education for both girls and boys, the value of girls, the harms of child labour, and aspects regarding children's health. Children's and parent's rights were learned from the perspective of Islam, which made communities more receptive towards the teachings and improved their acceptance of these issues in the communities.

"It was very important in my life because it was making us aware of everything, about our right, our parents' right and all that we could learn." (IDI 18, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

"The IALA programme kept the people of our society aware of education, underage marriages, life skills, and the ways of achieving their goals. This is a great achievement for the society that the people of our society were not aware of any of these issues before." (IDI 7, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"We were very happy with teaching any issue that was in accordance of Islam, and none of the taught issues were against it." (IDI 34, CL, Badghis, M)

Secondly, as a result of this awareness, IALA activities managed to change many people's views, attitudes, and behaviours towards adolescents' rights in the target areas.

The importance of children's education was understood and accepted by many community members, which led to more supportive attitudes (and even encouragement) for adolescents', particularly including girls', schooling. This is seen as one of IALA's major contributions.

"It has brought good changes to the society like how to solve their problems, set a goal, resolve conflicts and help their children because there were some people who did not let their children to go to school but now everyone let them, it is a change." (IDI 23, MAG Member, M, Badghis)

"There was a lot of strictness about girls in our society. Girls were not allowed to go to school, girls were not allowed to go far. In our society, there were people who did not leave their daughter to go from here to their next-door house. When we saw things from this MAG and applied them, a lot of changes took place in the society. Now, there is no one in our area who opposes his daughter not going to school" (IDI 43, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

In both provinces, actors mentioned that a significant number of adolescents who were out of school had gone back, and that all adolescents who took part had increased their interest in education, as they saw it as a goal for themselves and to improve their future. Moreover, children who became literate as a result of IALA and who thus improved their self-confidence and self-worth is another major achievement of the programme.

"Yes of course; they helped us to get rid of the blindness of illiteracy, we were happy. They taught us how to read, they really helped us for our future." (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"It made our children fully educated and they learned how to read and write. People were aware of their children's rights, and they were supporting their children. I support my daughter a lot to study and become a doctor in the future." (IDI 25, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

Furthermore, the harms of child marriage were thoroughly conveyed by IALA activities. Adolescents, parents, and leaders who took part rejected this practice and evidenced what they had learned regarding its detrimental effects for youth. Furthermore, stakeholders convened on their perceptions that child marriages have decreased in the areas where IALA activities took place. Adolescents have become vocal in their rejection of these practices, pivotal in convincing their parents, and have also managed to reach out to other community members and leaders to seek prevention of these practices. Leaders have also shared their knowledge on the harms of these practices through religious sermons, as well as informal sessions in their communities.

"Yes, because as you know, we understand that early marriages and hard work make the children miserable in our society. We could defend our rights and do not let others to do these things." (IDI 20, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"Yes, for example early marriage were more before MAG but after MAG it decreased." (IDI 6, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"...we had more than 15 cases in which a group of teenagers terminated the marriage of minors and launched various campaigns around early marriage in the school about false cultures, including working in the dowry section. These are things that make people very happy" (KII 1, Programme staff, Bamyán, M)

Moreover, different stakeholder groups agreed that adolescents had increased their knowledge and skills as a result of IALA's trainings and stated that they had a better behaviour and were more active in the community.

It is clear from the interviews and accounts given that IALA has had a powerful effect on the lives of people involved, who would envision their lives and their communities' lives very differently without having had this intervention.

"If I hadn't been to the MAG... everything that changed in my life has changed because of MAG; things I learned now that I didn't know before, for example about sports, life skills, having goals, making decisions, finding friends." (IDI 1, MAG Member, F, Badghis)

4.5.9.1 CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIOURS TOWARDS CHILD MARRIAGE

The findings from the summative evaluation show an increased level of awareness of the harms of child marriage among all beneficiary categories and a perceived decrease in the practice indicated by both target communities and programme implementers across both provinces. Evidence of uptake of individual and community-level actions towards its prevention is strong within the context of the MAGs, although beyond and after this context it is clearer on an individual rather than a communal level.

Most adolescents and parents interviewed reported having had little or no information on the detrimental effects of child marriage prior to their participation in the programme. The MAG trainings, cascade learning, and community discussions were key for increasing their knowledge and awareness about these. All parents and adolescents interviewed showed an increased knowledge on the implications and effects of early marriage after taking part in IALA activities.

"At the time, when I had little information, I did not know the importance of those topics. When I came to MAG and learned these, I became very sensitive to communicating the topics to those who do not have access to such programmes, to inform them. This will help to prevent the bad customs from our community and move toward improvement." (IDI MAG Member 57, Bamyan, F)

Respondents identified several harms of child marriage, which included: the thwarting of adolescents' lives and prospects, the discontinuation of their education, the exposure of girls to physical risks linked to early pregnancy, and the hindering of their rights to decide on their futures. As a result of the increased awareness, respondents reported changes in their views and perceptions, considering early marriage a harmful practice which they were opposed to. Generally, beneficiaries stated that marriages should happen only after the legal age of 18 years and preferably over that (with the appropriate age for girls being usually a little lower than for boys), and that marriages should happen by consent of the parties involved, respecting their rights to decide.

"Underage marriages could hurt both society and the partners. It is good to be avoided till the legal age. Because it is detrimental, and partners cannot achieve their goals." (IDI 21, MAG Member 21, Badghis, F)

"Sometimes when she came home, she was telling me about early marriages, pregnancy, and she was telling me that people should not marry their underage girls because they will be pregnant at a young age and this causes so many problems, like it is possible that the mother or the child can die." (IDI 25, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

As a result of this increased awareness of beneficiaries and their transformed understanding of child marriages, the qualitative study could identify evidence of perceived societal changes at a larger scale in the target communities, where parents, MAG mentors, and community and religious leaders stated that, in their view, the practice of child marriage had significantly decreased after the programme took place. The findings also show an increase in actions among all categories of interviewees against the practice of child marriage, particularly among adolescents, as well as by some community and religious leaders.

A: I think they were more in the past.

Q: What is the reason that they became less now?

A: People were not informed enough in the past; but now people are educated, and they know about the results of this issue." (IDI 58, MAG Parent, Bamyan, M)

"Early marriages were common, but we can say very clearly that they have decreased. I have mentioned before that people have seen a negative result, that people's awareness has increased, and underage marriages have decreased too because in the villages and regions that we live they happen [only] rarely." (IDI 35, RL, Badghis, M)

"Before the class, they did not know anything about underage marriages. For example, when they witnessed an underage marriage, they did not do anything about it and did not have any reaction to it. It caused underage marriages in society to become less prevalent, totally eradicating it in some places" (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, M, Badghis)

Adolescents' shifts in attitudes and behaviours towards child marriage can be perceived both in their own lived experiences as well as through the 'outward' activities they were involved in through knowledge sharing, awareness raising, and actions to prevent early marriages in their families and communities. Firstly, interviewee responses revealed that adolescents had rejected the practice of child marriage for themselves after taking part in IALA activities, even when they may have accepted it before.

"In the first fifteen days of our workshop, four girls from my team wanted to be engaged but when awareness was given in the programme, they refused their engagement." (IDI 56 MAG Mentor, Badghis, F).

"Some members of our group got engaged and were supposed to get married two months later, but as they were below the legal age, so their wedding was postponed" (IDI 62, MAG Mentor 62, Badghis, F)

Moreover, there is evidence that adolescents have acted as agents of change to various degrees in their families and communities, sharing the knowledge they acquired on child marriage and its harmful effects and promoting the prevention of this practice by talking to their peers and families outside of the MAGs. Adolescents, parents and MAG mentors recalled several accounts of adolescents actively getting involved in the prevention of child marriage, by talking to the families of those to be married, and even to community leaders and local councils in some cases.

"Yes, in the past, we used to accept it based on false customs, but now we realized that underage marriage is of no value. Now we can share our ideas with the society to prevent ourselves and other girls from getting married" (IDI 63, MAG Member, Bamyan, F)

"We talked about the negative consequences of child marriage and gave information to our classmates as well. We campaigned outside of MAG too just to inform the other people of the society as well" (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyan, F)

"Yes, I have said before that some people accepted, and it affected them. For example, my neighbour had a daughter who wanted to give to a husband, but when I went to the course, I realized that underage marriages are harmful. I told my neighbour that your daughter is a child and doesn't give permission to get married. Fortunately, they accepted, and they have not given their daughter to her husband". (IDI 8, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

"... there was a girl from our area whose marriage was planned in her early age, there was not much time left to her wedding. When we joined this MAG, I shared that we must do something to prevent the wedding, not to destroy the future of this girl. We met in the group and selected a few people and sent them to the girl's family [to say] that this should not be done, that the bride was underage and should not be married because she does not understand anything about life. By doing so, we were able to prevent that marriage." (IDI 43, MAG Member, F, Bamyan).

The endline results suggest that child marriage could be prevented especially in cases when both parents and adolescents took part in IALA activities; sometimes also when only adolescents participated, but possibly less so, since parents' involvement and influence on decision-making appeared to be important, and since the level of adolescents' sensitization of their parents varied. Most interviewed parents stated they had changed their views about child marriage after becoming aware of its disadvantages and harms to their children, which prompted changes in their approach towards their children's lives and in their own behaviours. Many recounted for instance not intending to make their children marry anymore and to wait until they are ready or even let them make the decision, and to encourage their education.

"In the beginning, I was thinking of giving my son a wife, but these courses completely changed my mind, so I did not force any of my sons to get married." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"Yes, I have talked about early marriage at home and came to the conclusion that a girl should finish her school and education before marriage. Later on, they should decide about her marriage as per the Islamic rules and regulations" (IDI 45, MAG Parent, Bamyan, M)

Further evidence of changed awareness and practices regarding child marriage comes from religious and community leaders. Leaders interviewed felt that IALA's teachings were in line with their understanding of Islam, which allowed them to embrace and share them with their communities. Community and religious leaders play a vital part in multiplying the knowledge acquired, considering their position in Muslim societies, and the qualitative evidence appears to show that they did this through religious sermons, education at the Madrasas, 'formal' community discussions as well as through informal gatherings.

In addition to spreading information and knowledge, community and religious leaders seemed to have sometimes played a role as agents of change by getting involved in practices to prevent and reduce child marriage. For example, respondents mentioned that Imams started paying attention to the age details and the consents of girls for the marriage to be carried out, and that community leaders sometimes intervened in preventing child marriages by convincing the families' involved of its harmful effects.

"Well, as far as we learned from the training, we passed it onto others and made them aware, for example, of preventing early marriages, which is both mentally and physically defective. Well, sometimes it happens because they are economically poor." (IDI 33, RL, Badghis, M)

"Now such a thing does not exist, and people observed it and the discussion of the teenager group was excellent." (IDI 53, MAG Parent, Bamyan, M)

"In most marriage parties they invite us for the recitation of the ceremony, but if boy and girl are teenagers, we try to prevent the marriage." (IDI 36, RL, Badghis, M)

As mentioned, most respondents reported that, in their view, child marriage had gone down considerably in their communities. However, due to the methodological limitations of the study, it is neither possible to confirm the actual changes took place (if any) nor to establish causality. To put this in context, the midline findings showed a statistically insignificant reduction of child marriage in the intervention areas. Despite strong evidence of changes in the understanding of child marriage provided by different stakeholders, and some evidence of changes in their practice, and despite the overall perception by all respondents that child marriages have decreased as a result of IALA, some informants also pointed out that not all community members changed their minds and that work needed to be done on sensitization on this issue. Respondents considered that lack of awareness in combination with poverty-stricken conditions are important factors where child marriage still happen.

4.5.9.2 CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIOURS TOWARDS PREGNANCY

The findings show that pregnancy had not been a topic discussed by adolescents prior to IALA, and that their knowledge and awareness of early pregnancy risks had increased as a result of their participation in programme activities. Moreover, adolescents identified child marriage as the main reason contributing to early pregnancy and discussed it in their knowledge sharing and awareness raising activities with peers, parents, and community members to promote its prevention.

Adolescents shared that learning and discussing sensitive issues through IALA activities, like pregnancy and child marriage, was a new experience for them. Some of them also expressed that it was difficult to do so due to feelings of shame, shyness, and the limited information they had. However, according to MAG mentors, the discussion of the topic was welcomed by adolescents, parents, and other community members. Adults reportedly appreciated having gained knowledge about this and the potential harms it can cause to their children.

"They told us to not force our daughters to marry someone at a young age because of pregnancy endurance. People had a positive reaction, and they did not ask their daughters for early marriage, and they found that if they asked their daughters for marriage at a young age, they will face so many problems." (IDI 25, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

Many adolescent girls interviewed reported to have learned about the negative consequences that early pregnancy can have on them, including health, economic, and social impacts. Some boys also explicitly mentioned that early pregnancies should be discouraged. The major risks mentioned by adolescents were poor health and complications, difficulties in managing childcare, and limited opportunities and future prospects in their lives due to shortened education.

"They told us that it is harmful for a girl to get pregnant underage and the family should avoid engaging girls at the early age because of her future. Her future will be in danger if they do" (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"Yes, if a girl becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby (...) it will be not good for both" (IDI 73, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

Adolescents also learned about precautionary measures and self-care needed to ensure a safe pregnancy. Girls reported having understood the importance of good nutrition and diet while pregnant, to be mindful of not lifting heavy weights or engaging in hard physical exercise, and to be careful about the consumption of medicines.

"We learned that during pregnancy we must eat diverse and good quality food, and to not hold heavy things. They taught us these types of things." (IDI 41, MAG Member, F, Bamyan)

MAG mentors testified to the transformation of adolescents' mindsets, from not knowing about this topic and feeling shame in discussing it, to feeling empowered about knowing the health risks, harmful consequences, and key issues for a safe pregnancy, and spreading this knowledge along.

"Their minds were completely changed. At first, the students did not know at what age they should get married, but after teaching, at what age they should get married and become pregnant, they learned these issues and told their parents about these" (IDI 30, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

After IALA, adolescents expressed concerns and increased awareness about health risks related to early pregnancy and underlined the importance of family planning to prevent unplanned pregnancies. Both adolescents and parents identified child marriage as a main reason contributing towards early pregnancy, and thus emphasized the importance of having children marry at the legal age. Adolescents gave avoiding early pregnancy as one of the reasons for the need to prevent child marriage in their communities during their knowledge sharing and awareness raising activities with peers, families and community members.

4.5.9.3 CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND BEHAVIOURS TOWARDS EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ENROLMENT

The results provide evidence on the changes that IALA has prompted regarding adolescents' education. Interviews with adolescents, parents, mentors and community leaders show that IALA interventions – from MAGs to community level activities – increased awareness of adolescents' (and particularly girls') rights to education and the relevance of education for improving their lives and their future. This in turn raised children's motivation to attend school.

As a result of their participation in MAGs, adolescents increased their levels of confidence as well as their decision-making and goal-setting skills, which encouraged them to believe that there were possibilities to achieve their goals and prompted them to make decisions about their lives, such as returning to school. Even most students who were already going to school reported to feel more motivated and encouraged to pursue their education. Although MAGs offered a different training and education than school, MAG attendance appears to have increased adolescents' motivation to learn in general. Hence, for those who were out of school, this meant a motivation to attend, and for those who were in school this meant dedicating themselves more to their studies. Additionally, there is evidence of increased motivation by adolescents to inform others about the value of education. MAG participants inspired their peers to go to school: peer dynamics reportedly led to interest in attending school among

adolescents who had not participated in MAGs, as they observed MAG participants' learning outcomes, including literacy.

"It is so crucial to study and make our future bright. In the first place, our parents should think about us and persuade us to study. And then I am so satisfied by this course because the teachers always were emphasizing [we could have] bright and good futures." (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

"For now, when adolescents are attending school, they seem really happy. Because they know that a bright future is possible only with education and training. In general, they love learning, and they are enjoying this process." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

As a result of the shifts in mindsets and awareness of the importance of education, adolescents and their families see more added value to their lives through education than they did before IALA. This increased awareness led to several changes in the target communities' attitudes and behaviours towards school attendance and education overall.

Firstly, there was a reported increase in school attendance from many out of school children, particularly girls, including those who had dropped out of school as well as those whose families previously did not allow them to attend. Interviews across all categories of respondents confirm this finding.

"The courses had a positive effect on both the boys and the girls, causing the girls to go to school, even those whose parents had not previously allowed them to go to school..." (IDI 38, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"The change that I have witnessed is that now families are all allowing their children to go to school. This is a big change that has happened to our society." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

"A: Yes, it influenced their point of view even girls and boys who had dropped out of school were re-enrolled to school.

Q: Is attending school by your adolescents' group, important for their lives?

A: Yes, when they understood the importance of education, they rejoined the school." (IDI 56, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

"If they had not been in the MAG, their lives would have been in a state of disarray, they would have had no changes in their lives. Now I am so happy that all of these children are literate, they are aware of their rights and became interested in their lessons." (IDI 39, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

In the cases where education had been discontinued, adolescents' new perspectives and skills prompted them to reach out to their families to allow them to continue their education. Many adolescents' accounts show that, after taking part in MAGs, they actively asked their parents to allow them or their siblings to attend school, which they had not done before.

"... my family did not understand, after I told them about children's rights, they understood that they should send my sister and younger brother to school for studying." (IDI 26, MAG Member, Badghis, M)

"...[the] MAG causes that they find information about education and training and life skills. The education and training caused some students to go and recognize to the people that they were not going to school with, and they taught them and gave them motivation." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

Adolescents also acted as agents of change for peers in their communities, campaigning outside the MAGs to promote access to education. They did so via different means, including peer to peer learning, reaching out directly to the families of out-of-school children to discuss their right to access education, talking to community or religious leaders, and carrying out various awareness raising activities, such as participating in community discussions, going door-to-door to families, and implementing artistic activities such as theatre to promote children's rights. In some cases, adolescents also involved community and religious leaders to overcome the challenges of families who were refusing to send their children to school.

"As a result of this teenager group, we were able to help other girls who were out of school and get them back to education." (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"They [adolescents] gave a very good proposal that said those people who studied till six grade and after that they left the school, we want to speak with their parents to include them in school again. And we shared their opinion in all the groups and after that, students went to their villages and spoke with parents and fortunately most of them returned to school again". (IDI 60, MAG Mentor, Badghis, F)

Adolescents' advocacy work for promoting education of their peers faced challenges, as some families' showed resistance to let their children (particularly girls) attend school, often due to their socio-economic realities and prevalent gender norms. In terms of socio-economic factors, the challenge of child labour in agriculture and herding activities in many villages was identified as a factor preventing school attendance. MAG members' recollections show a sense of empowerment in their ability to face the challenges of families not sending their children to school and in promoting the goals of attending school for the betterment of their peers, irrespective of their gender or location.

"A: It was the issue of my sister going to school and I kept up with my family that this should be done. She must come back to school.

Q: What was their reaction? A: Their reaction was first anger and later calm. Q: What happened in the end? A: In the end we concluded that she must go to school." (IDI 43, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"In most of the places, people became interested and encouraged their children, but [...] in some villages, some families sent their children to work instead of school, and then we talked to their parents and the elders of their village to find a solution so that they could go to school as well. Eventually the result was that they took turns caring for their sheep so that their children would have a chance to go to school." (IDI 81, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, F)

The endline findings also show that parents' attitudes towards the value of education played a key role in supporting or preventing education for their children. Parents' interviews showed that IALA's activities had allowed them to increase their knowledge and awareness about children's rights, particularly their rights to education, which should be equal between boys and girls. This happened both through adolescents' awareness raising at their own homes, discussing with their parents what they had learned at the MAGs, as well as through the trainings and community discussions on children's rights, which many parent interviewees had attended as well.

"Now the majority of families understands and allows their daughters to study away from home, which is different from before" (IDI 57, MAG Member 57, Bamyán, F).

"Yes, there were girls who did not go to school, or their families did not allow girls to go to school, but after this training, they found out and the transferred students were able to even tell their family and be encouraged, and I also told them how useful going to school is and the families allowed their daughters to go to school." (IDI 29, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"... some people did not send their daughters to school. We studied and after going to their houses, we told them that they should let their daughters to go to school. I myself at first when I was in the village I was going to school. When I got older, they dropped me out of school. Since I joined this course, I joined back to school to finish the course." (IDI 18, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

Aware of their rights and empowered to set goals and make decisions about their own lives, adolescents sensitised their parents to support their education, with the belief that this could enable them to have better opportunities, including working in well-regarded professions and getting involved in the improvement of their own communities. As a result, parents showed more conviction about the importance of education and more willingness to allow their children to attend school, and in many cases encouraged them to go to school for a better future. This effect was further backed by interviews with MAG mentors, community and religious leaders.

"Yes, they told us girls have so many rights over their parents, that they should learn and get an education like boys. People reacted well and were happy. I myself enrolled my daughter in school and I am happy about that." (IDI 25, MAG Parent, F, Badghis)

"A: There were discussions that teenagers can study for a brighter future to serve their community in the future.

Q: How did the members of the community react to these discussions? What did people think?

A: The members of the community were happy and decided that the teenagers should study and serve their community." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, M, Badghis)

Furthermore, interviewed parents seemed to highly value adolescents' gained literacy through MAGs. This seems to be especially beneficial for older adolescents, who got a chance through MAGs and ALCs to 'catch up' and attend school, and who otherwise might have lagged and not found a chance to take up education at their age.

"Yes, for all the changes, I saw that the level of literacy in school had increased and those who were not in school their education level was better than before, and their lives had changed a lot". (IDI 39, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"It made our children fully educated and they learned how to read and write. People were aware of their children's rights, and they were supporting their children. I myself support my daughter a lot to study and become a doctor in the future". (IDI 25, MAG Parent, Badghis, F)

Moreover, many parents valued that MAGs were not only teaching how to read and write and other useful skills, but also "good behaviour". Parents acknowledged that adolescents treated their parents and community in a better way since taking part in the groups, showing more respect and better communication, and overall having a better relationship with their communities.

"Yes, after joining the group, his behaviour changed in terms of learning capacity and knowledge. His behaviour and treatment with family members and neighbours became good." (IDI 15, MAG Parent, M, Bamyán)

"We are happy that they got rid of poverty, they study and do good work, they are not addicted [to drugs]; we are happy that our village is well, their name is raised, they have become our pride." (IDI 76, MAG Parent, M, Badghis)

Stakeholders' reports suggest that IALA activities had a positive influence on increasing school enrolment and decreasing harmful practices which prevent school attendance, such as child marriage, although these results cannot be generalised by the qualitative study. What can be argued is that MAGs provided adolescents with skills and motivation to get an education, as well as with advocacy skills that they implemented in their communities to promote school attendance among their peers and their families. In addition to adolescents' advocacy, trainings and community level discussions allowed parents' and leaders' to also increase their awareness of children's rights and the importance of education, which prompted changes in their attitudes and behaviours towards adolescent schooling and made them more inclined to allow and encourage adolescents to pursue their studies. Moreover, changed views on education also appeared to be related to changes in attitudes towards children's rights, in particular early marriage. As one MAG mentor pointed out:

"A lot of things have changed. In the past, people did not know about underage marriages. Especially in the villages, it decreased unbelievably. Before this project, a lot of boys and girls were not allowed to go to school. But, after this project, they realized the importance of these issues, especially when we conducted different kinds of sessions and

seminars. Finally, they let both genders go to school and underage marriages were avoided". (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M).

Yet, even though adolescents and their parents ascribed an increased value to education after taking part in IALA, systemic challenges, such as difficult economic circumstances, lack of schools, non-availability of higher classes, and disadvantages for girls in accessing education prevail in many areas. Despite respondents emphasizing the importance of equal education opportunities for boys and girls, many still observe girls being disadvantaged and less likely to attend school or to be in school for shorter periods of time as compared to boys. Moreover, government regulations strongly influence the level of girls' education, whereas girls themselves would generally prefer to be able to go to school and be supported by the government to do so.

"There is a barrier for a girl to study away from home, but there is no barrier for boys. Girls and boys should be given equal rights." (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"Another reason is that the school is mixed, and some families do not allow girls and boys to study in the same class." (IDI 65, MAG Parent, Bamyán, F)

"There is no high school in our valley. A high school is present in Shibar which is far away from our valley. The people in our valley are poor and cannot not send their children to it. Moreover, the transport is also not good. Therefore, [after] reaching up to 9th class they are unable to continue their education." (IDI 53, MAG Parent, Bamyán, M).

"People had a good reaction and were happy that they have informed them from these issues but still some of the people's mind have not changed and is the same as its first state". (IDI 11, MAG Parent, Badghis, F).

"I saw a lot of changes in people who did not allow their daughters to go to school. Not supporting their children. Some of these people had changed their way of thinking, and some of the people have remained the same". (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

More challenges to education and inclusiveness seem to be prevalent in remote locations, further away from cities. In addition, boys are not only usually favoured over girls to get access to education in case of constraints, but they also seem to attend school for longer. While unequal treatment of boys and girls has not disappeared, most respondents reported perceived improvements in terms of access to education for boys and girls compared to the situation before IALA.

4.6 SUSTAINABILITY

4.6.1 Impediments to the continuation of activities and participation

The continuation of IALA activities after the programme ended has been adversely affected by several major external factors.

Firstly, it should be mentioned that towards the end of the programme implementation, COVID-19 posed disruptions to the activities due to governmental regulations on social distancing and closure of schools. The programme reacted to this by creating COVID-19 awareness activities and spreading knowledge about hygiene and social distancing through the MAG participants. However, many activities could not be continued as foreseen.

The conditions brought about by the political transition to Taliban rule are viewed by all stakeholders interviewed as a key barrier to the continuation of relevant programme activities and the fulfilment of IALA's goals in gender equality and access to education. At the time of the evaluation, many schools had been closed, girls were not allowed to attend¹⁰, women were being ordered to cover their faces and remain at home. Many respondents mentioned that they had not met since the Taliban had come or had become disengaged.

"We did not follow the programme of the teenager group anymore. For the time being, they are no longer active, I think more than maybe these insecurities and changes ended or what happened. I do not know after that, and we did not follow up." (IDI 53, MAG Parent, Bamyán, M)

*"Q: How is situation of your community now? Does any activity run still or is any activity programmed to run?
A: No, it doesn't now. Because of Taliban most girls cannot go out." (IDI 6, MAG Member, Badghis, F)*

"Since the Taliban came, neither the committee nor the group of teenagers came, and we did not meet here anymore." (IDI 48, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

Participants were still expectant of any changes to the situation of school reopening and girls' attendance to school, which they considered a government responsibility. There was frustration and restlessness regarding the further course for these developments, as parents and adolescents highlighted the importance of school for them.

"In the previous government, the married women were able to study, but now it is more difficult, and we cannot study. For us and government should pave the way and let us study for a better future." (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

¹⁰ By March 23, 2022, the Afghan government announced that schools beyond grade 6 would remain closed for girls: <https://tonews.com/afghanistan-177237>

Moreover, deteriorating economic conditions including unemployment, lack of access to financial support, and nutrition were causing serious concerns for families in the target areas. Under the new conditions created by the new Taliban rule, there were reports all over the country of young girls being offered in marriage.

"There are still some people present which differentiate between boys and girls. After the rule of the Emarat [the current government], there is a special situation, especially for girls, and there are no lessons, and the family pays a lot of attention to marriages. So, by having such prerequisites some early marriages also take place." (IDI 77, CL, F, Bamyan)

Beyond the current situation, there are also structural barriers, both infrastructural and socio-cultural, which are still present and making an impact in the possible continuation of activities and the reaping of benefits for the target groups. One is the still limited access to higher levels of classes/schools in the target areas, which particularly girls are affected by, and which can only be deepened by the current school closures and related mandates. Lack of separate classes for girls and boys also affects attendance. Moreover, poverty and child labour remain strong barriers for higher and more consistent participation of vulnerable children.

"There is no higher secondary school, if it is established here. My daughter will go to there. She cannot go that far to Shibar, where higher secondary school is present. Here, only 9th grade classes are being held in school and after that it is difficult for girls to go as far as Shibar and other places." (IDI 49, MAG Parent, Bamyan, F)

"... against boys, the only thing that affects them the most is hard labour, and the question is why it should be done. The reason is that their fathers are poor, and they dig wells, wheat bricks, reap wheat, and other hard work. Children are more involved in hard work that deprives them from education. In the problems of our girls, there is no school at all in their neighbourhoods. They are deprived of lessons and education. Only religious education is given to them, and another problem is that underage marriages took place due to the poverty of fathers and families. The dowry must be enough for the husband to pay, and if he cannot, their husband must go to Iran, find expenses, and then get married." (IDI 34, MAG CL, Badghis, M)

In addition, prevailing social and gender norms -particularly in remote areas with tribal customs – are still seen as barriers to broader impacts. It's understood that, although IALA has made big strides in raising awareness about children's rights and children's protection in the target areas, bringing knowledge that was not there before and sensitizing communities, changing socio-cultural norms, sensitivities and behaviours is a long process that takes time. Girls and boys are still treated differently, with boys having more freedom outside the house and girls being expected to stay indoors. Traditional norms means that some families still do not accept that girls go to school, especially after they become older. The same undervalue of girls, coupled with economic problems, make families inclined to child marriage practices (even if these have reportedly decreased according to stakeholders' views) and to other practices such as girl-for-girl exchanges (Alishani), which were mentioned to still be happening.

"... the challenges that children are facing, especially girls, are the concern of some customs and traditions, which should be worked a little in the field of awareness and provide grounds for children to be able to continue their education and work with their parents and be helping and be partners with health training centres." (KII 3, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

"Yes, there is. Early marriage is very rare, but girls by girls exchanging alliances and things like that happen and exist right now." (IDI 37, RL, Badghis, M)

Lack of awareness of children's rights is usually linked by stakeholders to illiteracy. Stakeholders considered that girls are treated less well in illiterate families and are less likely to be able to attend schooling. Promoting education to end illiteracy at community level was also mentioned as an important factor.

4.6.2 Enablers to continuation of activities and participation

On the other hand, there are also many enablers for the continuation of activities. A key one is parents' and communities' increased awareness of children's rights and the momentum generated by IALA's activities. Despite early resistance, many people in the target communities have become accepting of the MAG activities, and the positive changes seen in adolescents have meant that support for these and for adolescents at community level has increased. The basis created for the programme, and the social networks it tapped into, is still there to a great extent despite the migration and displacement that have occurred, and this platform can be utilized for any future activities in the same direction. Furthermore, as the understanding of the importance of education has increased among many parents in the target communities, so has the demand for education for their children. This is shown by interviewed parents requesting for schools to be back as well as for the formation of more literacy groups.

"In the first place, the same kind that [adolescents] are not given a chance in the societies of Afghanistan and the suggestions made by them are not considered, and if they are taken into account, it is very rare. At first, they did not believe in teenagers, and we asked them to let them know what they are doing. Even some of the next members attended the elders' meetings, which was remarkable." (KII 1, Programme staff, Bamyan, M)

Considering the importance of parental support for both adolescents' participation and their ability to fully engage with the programme and achieve the learning outcomes, parents' engagement can become a key enabler (or a key barrier) for activities. A systematic parental involvement is therefore crucial for the success of the programme.

Another key enabler is the wealth of knowledge created and sustained by MAG members, which can be tapped into for continuation of activities. They also have developed strong experience of designing and implementing

actions at community level, which can continue to promote the institutionalisation of volunteering. Some MAG members mentioned that they continue to informally share and discuss contents that they learned with their immediate environments. Moreover, some MAGs are still active and undertaking voluntary work in the areas of literacy, or carrying out activities for promotion of children's rights, hygiene and cleanliness. Some types of post-programme activities were reported in Bamyán centre, Keligan, Baghlar, KandiHa and Seyalayak. For instance, there were accounts of adolescents in Bamyán centre continuing literacy teachings, and in Seya Layak MAG members expressed discussing health issues such as the importance of hand washing. In some villages in Badghis (Khoda Madaha, Dahan Baghak), some interviewees mentioned holding informal discussions in relevant topics when needed in the community, while one interviewee mentioned that the child protection committee is still active. The continuity of initiatives seems to be linked to the levels of internalisation that the community has managed to acquire regarding the importance of the activities undertaken, as well as to the strength of their motivation for voluntary work.

"...in some places voluntary work is still done by group members in areas such as literacy and other work." (IDI 82, MAG Mentor, Bamyán, M)

"Yes, the activities which were in committee are still in progress. For example, the health, education, and children protection committees. In addition, the children protection committee is still striving to prevent underage marriages. Moreover, the education and training committee is encouraging people to study." (IDI 31, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"Currently, the situation is good. It's done due to the necessity of the people. If there is a problem, they gather in the mosque and each of us expresses his views among the people." (IDI 27, MAG Parent, Badghis, M)

Moreover, some community and religious leaders interviewed commented that they continue to share the teachings and be involved in problem solving in their areas in issues that could affect adolescents; this was mentioned as they have incorporated this task into their role and the consideration of their responsibilities, and they do so in formal contexts such as sermons at the mosque or madrasas, or also in informal discussions.

"There is no definite plan. Due to the demanding time, when a problem arises, we realize that this may cause problems for the children of our society, so when we find that something does not have a good outcome, at that moment we search for a solution." (IDI 35, RL, Badghis, M)

"There is no set time and whenever it is available, for example, if there is any party, ceremony, event or reciting the Quran; those who have taken the course transfer their information in those places." (IDI 33, RL, Badghis, M)

Many parents and adolescents seemed to have remained highly engaged with the programme and expressed their wishes for it to restart and continue educational activities. They expressed their wishes for the programme to restart, and there was a clear sense of momentum to be 'grabbed' as an enabler for the continuation of the activities.

"Yes, there is so much enthusiasm. If it starts again, the previous members would definitely participate and those people who have never been a member, they also seem really interested. Because this group is informative for the people." (IDI 75, MAG Member, Bamyán, M)

"For now, they do not let girls to go to school and study, but the boys are allowed. But we study with ourselves. Please continue these courses, I love to study, help people, and fulfil my dreams about becoming a doctor. I will be happy if you could help us." (IDI 24, MAG Member, Badghis, F)

Many respondents, both beneficiaries and programme staff, pointed out that a continuation of the programme would constitute an opportunity to consolidate the knowledge imparted and the changes that had begun to take place, and that without this continuation the impacts would suffer.

"We may lose and forget the things we have already learned, and if they are renewed, we may learn new things." (IDI, MAG Member, Bamyán, F)

"Yes, but there are some changes because if there is an activity in a society, there will be changes. If there is no activity, the changes that have taken place will disappear over the time." (IDI 39, MAG Mentor, Badghis, M)

"I would like to say that abandoning the programme in this way is a waste of what we have done so far, that is, we did and completed a task, but we did not continue. For example, the force that we have built their capacity is there and we can use those resources more. If this programme continues and a youth follow-up programme is taken from the programmes that have worked so far, and if it works on a larger scale, it will be much better." (KII 3, Programme staff, M, Bamyán)

5 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS USING PROCESS TRACING

On the basis of the summarised empirical findings outlined in Section 4, the evaluation team re-clustered the evidence according to the Theory of Change sequence, to establish if and to what extent the steps have been followed and outcomes achieved as a result of the intervention. As discussed previously in section 3.1, we have used two variants of PT to guide the two parallel concerns of the evaluation: to validate the theory of change and to identify and explain how and why certain outcomes happened and to what extent. Theory-testing PT was used to test the validity and assumptions of the Theory of Change developed in the midline evaluation and to analyse whether the respective causal mechanisms expected to lead to particular outcomes were present and occurred as assumed. Explaining-outcome PT helped to obtain a detailed understanding of how these mechanisms worked to produce the outcomes and was used to compare the evidence for several competing explanations and to identify the ones that were most robustly supported by evidence. Firstly, in section 5.1., we outline the evidence of the processes that took place under IALA to test which underlying assumptions for the programme’s performance held and which did not and why. Next, in sections 5.2 and 5.3., we analyse IALA’s achievement of outcomes using explaining-outcome PT. The two variants can broadly be understood as examining whether all parts of the theory existed and were working, and the other is a form of “tracing backwards”. The two variants however remain part of the same method so are used here in a complementary manner without there being a clear-cut division.

5.1 THEORY OF CHANGE VALIDATION

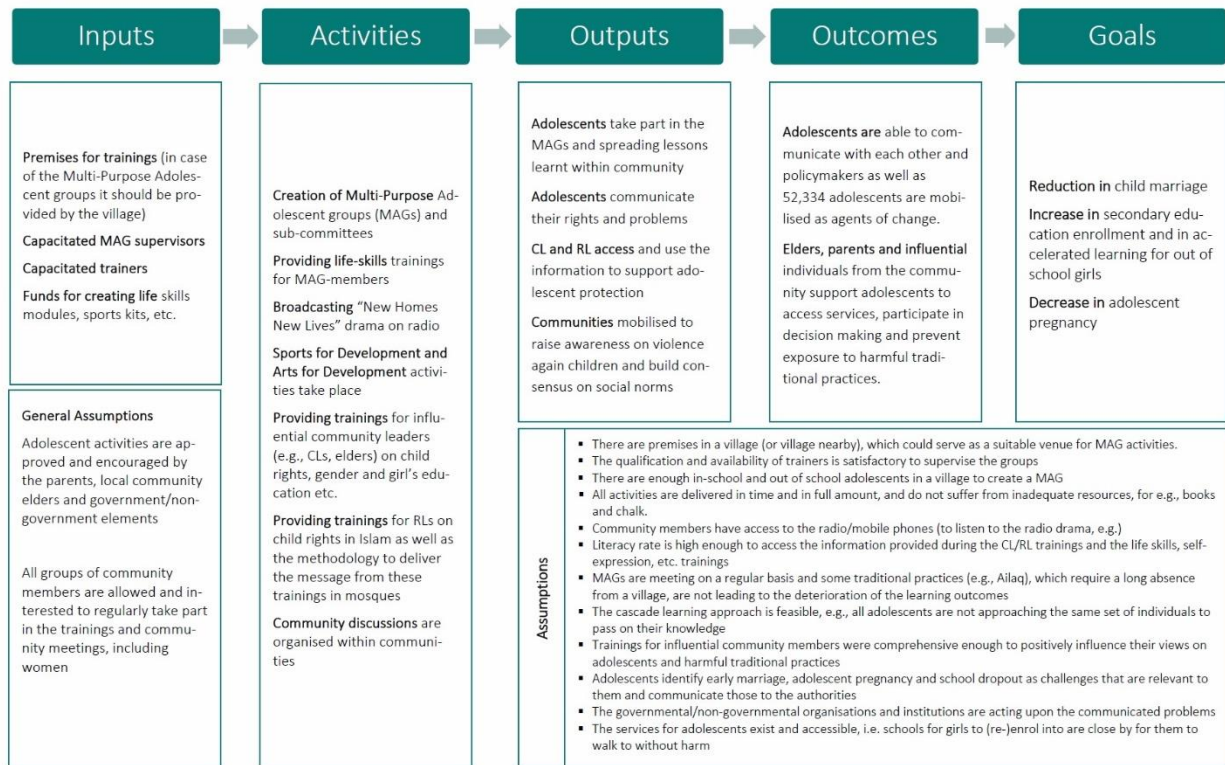


Figure 5: Theory of Change (Source: Midline Evaluation, 2020)

5.1.1 Assumptions

The ToC foresaw two overall assumptions and a series of more specific assumptions according to different realms of activities. The first overall assumption on adolescent activities being approved by parents, communities, governmental and not governmental entities held partially true. As indicated in the previous section, there was resistance found in the communities, particularly at the beginning, which incurred in some adolescents not being able to participate or their group activities suffering from limited legitimacy. However, levels of resistance differed between communities. There is evidence that resistance was overcome over time, and overall, the levels of resistance did not impede programme activities from going forward, with just some design changes happening to ensure continuation (e.g., holding gender separate MAGs). The second overall assumption, on community members being allowed and interested to take part in the activities, also held partially true. There was no evidence found to suggest that community members were generally not allowed to join the activities, and there were

accounts of participation of various stakeholders within the community, although the levels of interest and involvement differed. With regard to specific assumptions, we can conclude that:

- *There were premises in a village (or village nearby), which could serve as a suitable venue for MAG activities (held partially true)*, although this proved to be a challenge in some communities.
- *The qualifications and availability of trainers was satisfactory to supervise the groups (held true)*. No evidence was gathered regarding any substantial lack of trainer preparation, even though there were requests to enhance training on certain aspects, including visual aids, child protection topics, and specific training for illiterate children.
- *There were enough in-school and out of school adolescents in a village to create a MAG (held partially true)*. Some MAGs had to be created with adolescents from nearby villages, which produced challenges for their accessibility.
- *All activities were delivered in time and in full amount, and did not suffer from inadequate resources, for e.g., books and chalk (held partially true)*. Most activities were delivered. However, there were some delays in resource delivery which were later remedied, and some activities could not be held due to delays (community action plans in Badghis) and external factors (COVID-19);
- *Community members had access to the radio/mobile phones (e.g., to listen to the radio drama) (not held)*. Most adolescents reportedly did not have access to mobile phones, and if they did have access to radio, this was not considered a main medium of information and communication for them.
- *Literacy rate was high enough to access the information provided during the CL/RL trainings and the life skills, self-expression, and other trainings (not held)*. Literacy was a key challenge in training delivery, and design changes needed to be incurred to deal with this widely present issue. However, successful adaptations such as using more visual material and role play were carried out.
- *MAGs were meeting on a regular basis and some traditional practices (e.g., Ailaaq), which require a long absence from a village, are not leading to the deterioration of the learning outcomes (partially held)*. The evidence collected suggests that MAGs were mostly meeting on a regular basis. However, traditional practices, including farming and shepherding done by adolescents, were found to be an important factor impacting attendance and engagement in MAGs.
- *The cascade learning approach was feasible, e.g., all adolescents were not approaching the same set of individuals to pass on their knowledge (partially held, according to available evidence)*: the evaluation did not include out-of-MAG adolescents; thus, conclusions regarding the cascade learning's suitability for them cannot be drawn. What can be affirmed is that the evidence collected suggests the cascade approach was successfully held to some extent, as all adolescents reported having shared their knowledge with others (at least all with peers, most with family, and some with other community members as well).
- *Trainings for influential community members were comprehensive enough to positively influence their views on adolescents and harmful traditional practices (held true)*. According to the evidence gathered, trainings seem to have been comprehensive enough in terms of their coverage of children's rights and protection.
- *Adolescents identify early marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and school dropout as challenges that are relevant to them and communicate those to the authorities (held partially true)*. The evidence collected suggests that adolescents viewed these three topics as problems worthy of consideration, and there is evidence of some adolescents communicating these to leaders. However, there is no evidence of them communicating with other authorities.
- *The governmental/non-governmental organisations and institutions were acting upon the communicated problems: service providers (Pillar III) were not the focus of this evaluation. The evidence collected suggests that there were some mobilisation efforts from influential community members and programme implementers towards authorities. However, the government apparatus was in flux at the time of the study, and no further conclusions can be drawn.*
- *The services for adolescents existed and were accessible, i.e., schools for girls to (re-)enroll into are close by for them to walk to without harm (not held, according to available evidence)*. Limited number of schools and ALCs for girls and lack of access to these in some areas were identified by various stakeholders as key challenges to girls' empowerment. Moreover, at the time of the evaluation, many schools were closed, and there was uncertainty about their reopening by the new Taliban administration (see also footnote 5).

5.1.2 Inputs

According to the evaluation findings, most **inputs** outlined in the Theory of Change were delivered: MAG trainers and supervisors were put in place following capacity building, and funds for creating life skills trainings, sports for development were overall provided; venues for trainings were overall made available for participants, though this was only partially the case for MAG premises, as they depended on community resources and there were occasional issues for groups to have appropriate venues. Funds were also considered insufficient for the realisation of some community-level activities and action plan (details on inputs are available on section 4.2.6).

5.1.3 Activities

Inputs were utilised to carry out the wide variety of IALA **activities** foreseen in the programme design and reflected in the ToC. The implementation did not face major issues in delivering its activities, with the exception of the COVID-19 pandemic, which halted most programme activities in the last quarter. However, several challenges emanating from both the contexts in which the activities operated ('demand' side), as well as from the programme's design and operations ('programmematic' side) had tangible effects on implementation, producing divergencies and operational challenges (detailed analysis provided in section 4.2.6).

5.1.4 Outputs

The evidence collected suggests that some outputs outlined in the ToC were achieved by the programme, while others partially so, with specific differences between the achievements of pillars I and II. Adolescents participated in MAGs and shared their lessons learned with the communities, particularly with peers and families, while also with community members to some extent. Adolescents communicated their problems, mostly to peers and families, and some to leaders, while there is no evidence of their communication to other authorities, and they also engaged in social actions to prevent harmful practices, mostly in the context of MAGs. There is also evidence that some leaders used the information obtained for adolescent protection, propagating it formally or informally and engaging in activities to promote protection. Outside of the MAGs and the community trainings and discussions, there is limited evidence in our qualitative sample of systematic community actions taking place for protection. Yet, there are some reports of community members and leaders reaching out to others on an individual case by case basis, and some reports of occasional discussions (at the mosques or informally) regarding problems raised at community level (details available in Section 4).

5.1.5 Outcomes

How do these outputs translate into achieved programme outcomes? In order to shed light on the outcomes achieved by the programme and how these came about, the evaluation chose to utilise explaining-outcome process tracing. To provide explanations on how and to what extent outcomes were achieved, we operationalised the two outcomes outlined by the ToC by identifying the sequential steps needed to reach each, and then analysed the extent to which each step was completed against the evidence collected - triangulating results from the quantitative midline and the qualitative summative evaluations. This more inductive and holistic exercise allows us to trace and explain the processes that lead to fully or partially achieved outcomes, ensuring a holistic coverage of the steps, as well as the incorporation of feasible explanations to rule out alternatives that could have led to the outcomes.

The explaining-outcome variant of PT addresses the problem of attribution by carrying out "process induction" where a number of (competing) hypotheses that connect an intervention to an outcome through a "chain" of causal mechanisms and intervening steps is identified (White and Philips 2012). Each of these hypotheses is then examined against the evidence, which can then eliminate, confirm, strengthen or weaken a particular hypothesis. By examining the entire series/chain of intervening "links" against the evidence, we come to the series of linked hypotheses, which connects the intervention to the outcome (Befani and Stedman-Bryce 2017).

5.2 EXPLAINING OUTCOME 1

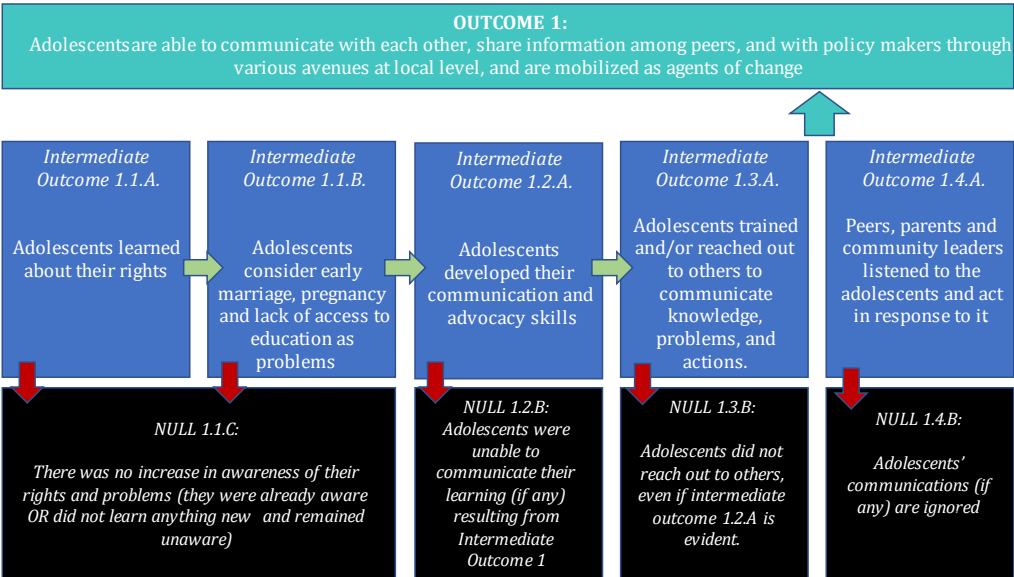


Figure 6: Causal chain – Outcome 1

Outcome theory: By the end of the programme, adolescents from two target provinces are able to communicate with each other, sharing information among peers, and with policy makers through various avenues, such as social media forums, mobile technologies, and traditional methods of communication at the local levels, and at least 52,334 adolescents (50% female and 50% male) are mobilized as agents of change for themselves and their communities through engaging in adolescent groups/Shuras. The programme reached a total of 86,528 adolescents (43,071 M / 43,457 F) and 90,224 young adults (46,244 M / 43,980 F) through 176 Multi-purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs).

5.2.1 Intermediate outcome 1.1a:

Adolescents learned about their rights

As shown in the previous result section, most adolescent respondents mentioned that they had become more aware of their rights following their participation in IALA, as the following representative response illustrates:

“It was regarding gender, children rights, and how long they are considered children, and what are their rights over parents [...] It felt good. In addition to the questions that were in my mind, I also encountered questions from other students and got familiar with those who were there.” (IDI 63, MAG Member, F, Bamyan).

These were all topics they had not previously considered (marriage, access to education, health, etc.), and several respondents mentioned asking mentors and their parents for more information on their rights.

During the summative evaluation, most adolescents identified learning about life skills and their rights as a very important outcome of their participation in MAG. Adolescents reported to practically not have discussed the topics of the life skills trainings prior to the involvement in the MAGs, as they neither had the information nor the skills and confidence to do this. For instance, one respondent stated, *“I had no information about self-esteem before, and had even not heard its name. The other thing on which I had no information was conflict. After joining MAG, I have learned these topics, which are new for me.” (IDI 57, MAG Member, Bamyan, F)*

The fact that these topics remained salient even years after they learned about it shows its importance to the participants (see also Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.9).

5.2.2 Intermediate outcome 1.1b:

Adolescents identify (1) early marriage, (2) early pregnancy, and (3) low access to education as problems

In the IALA midline and baseline data, approximately 45% of the adolescents identified bad quality of education as a major concern, and 36% thought that the absence of schools is a challenge. In total, around 66% of the adolescents thought that barriers to education were a major challenge they faced. However, only around 16% of the interviewed adolescents considered early marriage to be one of the major difficulties in general, while 26% also named child labour as one of the issues they face. In the summative evaluation, all adolescents interviewed expressed concern about early marriage, seeing it as a detrimental practice, and identified education as an important concern in their lives, for both boys and girls. Only very few respondents mentioned early pregnancy in the summative evaluation. As there was a purposive sample accounting for gender balance, and the interviewees were of the same gender, this could be considered somewhat surprising. However, the low salience of this topic can be explained by the fact that early pregnancy had been subsumed by early marriage as a problem, i.e., early pregnancy was seen as one argument (amongst many) against early marriage, but not considered separately as an issue on its own (see Sections 4.4.9).

5.2.3 Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.1c:

There was no increase in awareness. Adolescents were already aware of their rights and problems OR adolescents did not learn anything new and remained unaware of their rights and problems.

This hypothesis can be divided into three parts, a) the messaging or training did not reach the intended recipients, b) the recipients were unable to access the messaging primarily due to illiteracy, c) the recipients did not find the information novel or useful.

Evidence from the midline evaluation showed that countrywide media and messaging is only successful in reaching a small share of the population. When analysing the source of media that makes the biggest impact in 2017, the reach of television (23.2%) is the greatest, followed by radio (19.7%) and finally newspapers (3.3%) (Frölich et al. 2019, p. 81). As part of the radio programme, adolescents in Bamyan and Badghis received training on child marriage and the importance of education as a preparatory measure before they engaged in live debates and discussions with civil society and government representatives. However, the adolescents' interaction with the radio programme remained inadequate as the reach of the programme is reported to be somewhat limited. In

addition, 15 out of 29 adolescents interviewed during the midline reported not listening to the radio at all, and only five had participated in community or MAG radio listening sessions (ibid. P. 39). According to the IALA baseline and midline data, the three main channels to learn about rights and entitlements are friends and family (51%), mosque (41%), and TV (20%). Radio is thus not necessarily a popular medium of instruction (Section 4.1.6).

Interviewed adolescents showed strong engagement with the MAG concept and activities and reported that most of their group members attended regularly and participated actively, with absences being of a few students only in each group. Illiterate children had a more difficult time participating and grasping the concepts of the teachings, and it seems that their retention was more difficult than for literate children. Yet, there are many accounts that show that the MAGs motivated participants to become literate and to continue with their studies. Furthermore, training materials were revised, and MAG mentors used drawing and other activities to foster engagement and understanding of illiterate children (Section 4.1.3).

Efforts to adjust MAG activities were not limited to contents; MAG adolescents were encouraged to support their illiterate counterparts to help them incorporate the teachings, for instance by sitting next to them in the trainings, and to solve problems when they could not. In Bamyan, this also generated the launch of literacy groups to teach their peers to read and write, with the support of mentors and teachers (see Sections 4.1.1 and 4.3.1).

The null hypothesis can thus be completely rejected, as it is clear that messaging reached the MAG participants (though the role of radio is insignificant); information could be accessed even by out-of-school participants and the participants found it useful, as almost all responses calling it meaningful and important even after several years document.

Conclusion: Adolescents learned new skills and increased their awareness. Awareness was built especially regarding the importance of education. There was also some increase in awareness about the problem of early marriage, with early pregnancy seen as a subset of this problem. Illiterate children had difficulty accessing and retaining information, but this was addressed by revising teaching to be more visual and engaging through activities that improved the learning for illiterate participants. An unexpected benefit was that illiterate children were motivated to become literate as a result of MAG. Some of the biggest benefits were in the area of life skills, with many participants mentioning that they developed an understanding of the importance of self-esteem. Another important finding was that most adolescents identified aggression as a problem, with several specifically mentioning “telling peers and parents not to be angry” and “counting to 20 to reduce aggression” as something important that they learned. Listening to radio did not play any significant role in this outcome, though participation in community radio created a major improvement in the participants’ self-confidence and communication skills.

5.2.4 Intermediate outcome 1.2a

Adolescents developed their communication and advocacy skills

During midline, there was evidence that several adolescents and a MAG member in Bamyan wrote short stories and an article that addressed, among other things, the importance of education after he had acquired the necessary skills from the self-expression and writing training (Frölich et al., 2019, p. 28). During endline, respondents mentioned having taken part in theatre and door to door outreach activities, which is also a strong sign of an increase in communication skills.

During endline, all participant groups described a number of actions taken by adolescents to communicate their learning outcomes. Adolescents’ increased confidence has facilitated their involvement in community-level actions, including talking with their peers, family, and community members about topics they had learned in the MAG, and participating in activities of the MAG group in their areas, such as awareness-raising on early marriage, promotion of education among adolescents, involvement in literacy groups, theatre, hygiene promotion, and environmental campaigns (see Sections 4.5.3 and 4.5.4).

All adolescent respondents reported having improved their communication and interpersonal relationship skills, with most expressing that this had happened both within and outside their homes. Adolescents mentioned that they had learned how to talk to others, to better deal with conflicts and manage anger, to express their feelings and their problems, and they had generally improved their interpersonal relationships outside of their home, including better relations with other people and an improved ability to make friends. Moreover, they expressed greater confidence in themselves also from a communication standpoint, which has allowed them for example to speak out in class to other peers and to get involved in community outreach activities (see Sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.4).

5.2.5 Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.2b

Adolescents were unable to communicate their learning (if any) resulting from intermediate outcome 1

There is significant evidence from 1.2a and 1.3a (see below) based on which the null hypothesis can be rejected.

5.2.6 Intermediate outcome 1.3a

Adolescents trained and/or reached out to others (peers, parents, leaders and community) to communicate knowledge, problems, and actions.

Adolescents felt that sharing their knowledge with others was their duty, and they described to have worked both inside and outside of the school to do so. Overall, the MAG members interviewed reported feeling confident and comfortable with transferring their new knowledge on life skills to their peers. In most cases, they expressed having had positive experiences with mentoring, with peers being receptive to their efforts and feeling happy about the contents they learned (see Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.9).

Most adolescents interviewed spread their knowledge about the harmful effects of child marriage by discussing it with their peers (friends, school classmates, out of school children) and their families (parents, siblings and relatives from their extended family); there were only a few cases of adolescents who had not discussed this topic with their parents. There are also several accounts of adolescents engaging the families of other adolescents, and even sometimes community leaders, to help prevent child marriages in their areas (see Section 4.3.5).

There were also many accounts of adolescents taking part in informal campaigns to raise awareness of the issues learned at the MAGs, e.g., going door-to-door to families to increase awareness about the importance of education. MAG members also talked to families of adolescents who did not send their children to school to convince them to do so, as well as to prevent child marriages in cases where families were supporting this practice. Adolescents described doing this individually or as part of wider campaigns organised with their MAGs. Furthermore, adolescents described the organisation of social actions to improve their communities, such as cleaning campaigns, tree planting, health awareness (e.g., during COVID-19), and cultural and sports activities to promote children's rights (e.g., community theatre about early marriage, sports competitions in football and volleyball featuring boys and girls; see also Section 4.4.5).

Evidence of adolescents reaching out to community and religious leaders to discuss problems was present but much less uniform across MAGs than in the cases of reaching out to peers or families. Almost half of the adolescents mentioned reaching out to community or religious leaders about issues important to adolescents in the community.

5.2.7 Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.3b

Adolescents did not reach out to others, even if intermediate outcome 1.2a is evident.

The evaluation did not find evidence of adolescents' communication with policy makers from the discussions held with participants. None of the adolescents interviewed mentioned any child protection services when asked about a potential point of reference for problems or complaints, naming instead their parents or village representatives.

However, the evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of outcome 1.3a, so the null hypothesis can be rejected.

Conclusion: One limitation of the qualitative study is that it did not include non-MAG adolescents. Therefore, the quality of the knowledge delivery of LST and reception by non-MAG members could not be analysed. There is strong evidence for outcome 1.3a, and adolescents showed considerable intrinsic motivation in reaching out to their community, peers and parents. However, there is almost no evidence of their engagement with policy makers, and there is a clear difference in terms of the authority figures adolescents actually reached out to. It is highly likely that there was some hesitation and large differences in terms of the target groups of their advocacy if it involved authority figures.

5.2.8 Intermediate outcome 1.4a

Peers, parents and community leaders listened to the adolescents and act in response to it.

According to adult stakeholders, MAG members showed stronger community involvement than they did before joining the MAG, which is evidenced by the various actions described. Mentors and programme staff also acknowledged that adolescents had faced difficulties in their community outreach activities, particularly at the beginning, when they faced more community resistance and less legitimacy. Community members did not understand and/or opposed adolescents reaching out to discuss these topics; however, this changed over time through sensitization and awareness work. Many adolescents interviewed described feeling an improvement in their status and respect of their communities towards them after participation in the MAGs.

There were also examples of successful interventions where the advocacy of adolescents influenced parents and community leaders (see Sections 4.5.23 and 4.4.4), showing that adolescents engaged in advocacy and were even supported by their peers and/or families to influence others.

5.2.9 Alternative hypothesis (null) 1.4b

Adolescents’ communications (if any) are ignored

According to participants’ accounts (adolescents, parents, and mentors), most families’ reactions to adolescents sharing the contents of the MAGs were mainly positive, even though there were different levels of acceptance/resistance. Some parents still opposed these contents, with residents of smaller or more remote villages seemingly having a more difficult experience with this. However, the resistance and/or opposition seems to have lessened over time, as parents and community members realized that their children were gaining knowledge that they considered important or useful for their children, and as they saw first-hand positive changes in their children as they took part in the MAGs (see Section 4.5.3). There is also evidence of changes in parental attitudes and behaviours towards adolescents’ rights after they reached out to their families, including for instance more openness to allow or encourage them to go to school and to make decisions.

5.2.10 Final outcome

Breakdown of outcome 1 in two parts:

Adolescents able to communicate with each other and policy makers to share information

As seen in the discussion of intermediate outcomes, adolescents were able to communicate with each other, their families and village elders. Although communication between adolescents and policy makers cannot be shown, there is evidence that a few parents of MAG members got involved with education offices and councils. Furthermore, programme staff have reached out to government counterparts when cases were reported by MAG members.

There is also evidence that the most effective communication occurred not through the use of technological aids or radio but rather through activities such as theatre and door to door outreach.

Adolescents are mobilized as agents of change

Adolescents acted as agents of change for peers in their communities, campaigning outside the MAGs to promote access to education and expose the detriments of early marriage. They did this via different means, including peer to peer learning, reaching out to the families of out of school children to discuss their right to access education, and sometimes talking to community or religious leaders to help them solve problems. They also carried out various awareness raising activities such as participating in community discussions, going door-to-door to families, and implementing artistic activities such as theatre to promote children’s rights. In some cases, adolescents also involved community and religious leaders to overcome the challenges of families who were refusing to send their children to school.

5.3 EXPLAINING OUTCOME 2

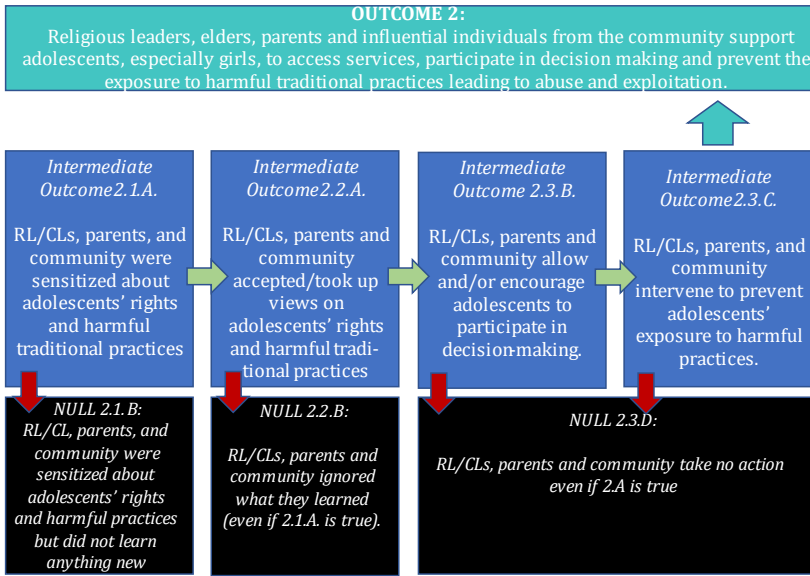


Figure 7: Causal chain – Outcome 2

Outcome theory: By the end of the programme, 60,651 religious leaders, elders, parents and influential individuals from the community in the 11 districts of the 2 target provinces support adolescents, especially girls, to access services, participate in decision making and prevent their exposure to harmful traditional practices leading to abuse and exploitation. The programme reached a total of 35,970 (17,584 M / 18,386 F) community leaders through community engagement campaigns including development and roll-out of community action plans to remove barriers to adolescent girls' and boys' access to education.

5.3.1 Intermediate outcome 2.1a

RL/CLs, parents, and community were sensitized about adolescents' rights and harmful traditional practices

RLs learned about children's rights from a religious/Islamic perspective through arguments from religious texts on Child Rights in Islam training. During the training, they learned about girls' needs and the relationships between quitting school and child marriage, girls' vulnerability to verbal and sexual harassment, and equality between men and women as it relates to child rights. Religious leaders considered that the trainings received on Child Rights in Islam were in line with Islamic law and teachings and thus expressed satisfaction with the contents. They reported that they had acquired new knowledge about important topics regarding children's rights and their place in society according to Islam, which included their rights to education, to not be involved in hard labour or early marriage, and children's healthcare (see Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). Religious leaders further emphasized that it is important that programme goals do not contradict teachings of Islam. While some community members first felt that the way topics were addressed during community discussions was not in line with their understanding of the Quran, religious leaders underlined that according to their interpretation, IALA goals for awareness raising were indeed aligned with what they preach about Islam, and that this allowed them to convince community members (see Section 4.2.4).

Influential community members were exposed to topics such as children's rights, gender equality, equal access to education, prevention of child marriage, and domestic violence, as well as the right to hygiene. Trainings and sessions were considered by community and religious leaders to have been in accordance with the teachings of Islam, and thus socially and culturally relevant (see Section 4.2.4). Community leaders stated that they acquired knowledge through the trainings that they did not have before about children's rights and their place in society. The new knowledge included how to consider and treat children, the protection of children against harmful practices, such as early marriage and child labour, the importance of education, learning about the value of girls, and the importance of non-discrimination between boys and girls, and children's health. Trainings and sessions were considered to have been in accordance with the teachings of Islam, and thus socially and culturally relevant (see Section 4.2.1).

5.3.2 Alternative hypothesis (null) 2.1b

RL/CLs, parents, and community were sensitized about adolescents' rights and harmful traditional practices but did not learn anything new

Trainings and sessions for influential community leaders seem to have been comprehensive enough, covering a wide variety of child protection issues. There is evidence that leaders substantially increased their awareness about these topics, of which, in their own words, they did not have too much knowledge and understanding before. Most interview responses showed that RL/CL considered the knowledge novel and useful. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected.

5.3.3 Intermediate outcome 2.2a

RL/CLs, parents and community accepted/took up views on adolescents' rights and harmful traditional practices

RL/CLs seemed to accept the messages transferred regarding adolescents' development and rights, including their right to education and the non-discrimination of girls. There is evidence that leaders contributed to sharing the knowledge they gained with adolescents and community members on children's rights, bringing awareness to their communities about adolescents' place in society, the harmful effects of child marriages, the importance of education, their rights to refrain from hard labour, the rights of girls and the importance of non-discrimination. The high amount of dowry and the problems this creates socially was also raised by some leaders. Knowledge was shared through religious sermons at mosques, sessions at the Madrasas (separate for boys and girls), 'formal' community discussions, as well as in informal gatherings where topics of child rights were addressed (see Section 4.2.4).

Messaging on the importance of children's education was generally well received. However, there was some resistance to other messages. One of the topics which seems to have had a less uniform response was child marriage, as disagreements were cited on this topic both at the midline and in the endline, particularly on the appropriate

age for girls to get married. Some conflicting responses were found, for example, with some community and religious leaders interviewed stating that marriage for a girl could be done over 15 or 16 years of age and 18 years for boys (even though they recommended that they be older), while most emphasized to have at least the legal age of 18 years old for both (see Section 4.2.4).

Almost all RLs and CLs stated that marriage should only happen after puberty, and they relativised between the age of marriage that was *permissible* and the age of marriage that was *advisable* (e.g., IDI 36 RL, M, Badghis; IDI 77, CL, F, Bamyan).

The messaging regarding child marriage seems to have been received partially by RLs/CLs and parents, but there was only slight support for the idea that adolescents should make decisions about their marriage. However, there were more mentions that adolescents should be consulted about their marriage (though the final decision would stay with the parents).

5.3.4 Alternative hypothesis (null) 2.2b

RL/CLs, parents and community ignored what they learned (even if 2.1a is true).

The evidence does not suggest that RL/CLs, parents, and community ignored what they learned, but there was a significant aspect of selective interpretation of the messaging, which means this hypothesis may be somewhat true.

Conclusion

There is a mixed picture regarding the messaging and the recipients' resistance to it. While the right of adolescents, including girls, having access to education was well received, other areas, such as child marriage were only partially accepted by some RLs/CLs (though all parents accepted marriage below the legal age to be wrong) and the point about adolescents' inclusion in decision-making found limited resonance. Different categories of respondents took up the messaging to different degrees, and in cases where it conflicted too much with previously held beliefs, they appear to have disregarded or relativised it.

5.3.5 Intermediate outcome 2.3b

RL/CLs, parents and community allow and/or encourage adolescents to participate in decision-making

After IALA, spaces seem to have opened up in terms of decision making for adolescents, even if the extent of that space differs. Parents still feature as the main decision-makers in families (and most frequently the father), but there is some evidence of changes in family dynamics, with most of the adolescents interviewed reporting to now have the confidence to reach out to their families in matters that concern them. They also mentioned that they voiced their opinions, being consulted by their families and/or taking part in decisions, even if the final decision in many aspects is the parents'. At the same time, many parents expressed that they allowed their children to make decisions about their lives (including daily life and education). This enlarged space had practical consequences for adolescents, as in many cases it led to changes regarding some aspects of their lives, such as attending school, with adolescents convincing their parents to study. A major concern for parents was that their children should make the right decisions, and parental approaches in their daily life decision-making differed from having a consultative role (giving advice, guidance) to a more active one, including approving or disapproving of decisions made (see Section 4.3.4).

All parents interviewed acknowledged early marriage as a harmful practice, stating that there should not be any forced marriages and that consent should be given from all parties, with almost all setting the acceptable age for marriage over 18 years and usually over 20 years. Some parents mentioned that girls and boys are the decision-makers, while others considered the parents to have a key role in this decision. Most considered that marriage is a decision taken together in consultation between parents and adolescents, even if some parents still expressed that the decision is ultimately theirs as guardians of their children (see Section 4.3.5).

5.3.6 Intermediate outcome 2.3c

RL/CLs, parents, and community intervene to prevent adolescents' exposure to harmful practices

There is anecdotal evidence of interventions to stop underage marriages and to promote school attendance.

There is evidence that leaders contributed to sharing the knowledge they gained with adolescents and community members on children's rights, bringing awareness to their communities about adolescents' place in society, the harmful effects of child marriages, the importance of education, the rights of girls, and the importance of non-discrimination. The high amount of dowry and the problems this creates socially was also raised by some leaders. Knowledge has been shared through religious sermons at mosques, sessions at the Madrasas (separate for boys and girls), 'formal' community discussions, as well as in informal gatherings where topics of child rights were addressed.

5.3.7 Alternative hypothesis (null) 2.3d

RL/CLs, parents and community take no action even if 2a is true

Due to considerable evidence to the contrary, the null hypothesis can be rejected

5.3.8 Final outcome 2.4a

RL/CLs, parents and community support adolescents to access services

The vast majority of parents interviewed were aware of the activities that their children took part in at MAGs; only few did not know about them. Many parents reported to have sometimes attended meetings to understand what their children discussed and learnt in those spaces. Mentors mentioned that most parents were collaborative, and sometimes even joined the group's activities, although they also reported that there was little cooperation in some areas. Mentors and programme staff also pointed out that without parental support allowing or encouraging their children to participate, MAG activities would not have been possible. There is also evidence that children sought the support of community members, parents, and clergy to enable the access of other adolescents to services (see Sections 4.3.5 and 4.4.5).

The political transition to the Taliban administration is seen by all stakeholders interviewed as a key barrier to the continuation of relevant programme activities and the fulfilment of IALA's goals in gender equality and access to education. At the time of the evaluation, many schools had been closed, girls were not allowed to attend school, women were ordered to cover their faces and remain at home. Respondents mentioned that they had not met or had become disengaged since the Taliban had come. Thus, not only have services been affected but also access to them is likely to be affected by this factor beyond the programme's control.

5.3.9 Final outcome 2.4b

RL/CLs, parents, and community support adolescents' participation in decision making processes and prevent exposure to harmful traditional practices

There is some evidence of changes in family dynamics resulting from the programme, with most of the adolescents interviewed reporting to have the confidence now to reach out to their families in matters that concern them. They also mentioned that they voiced their opinions, were consulted by their families, or took part in decisions, even if the final decision was the parents'. At the same time, many parents expressed that they allowed their children to make decisions about their lives (including daily life and education). This enlarged space had practical consequences for adolescents, as in many cases it led to changes regarding some aspect of their lives, such as attending school, with adolescents convincing their parents to study (see Section 4.4.3).

In addition to leaders' spreading information and knowledge, there was some evidence of community and religious leaders having played roles as agents of change themselves by getting involved in practices to prevent and reduce child marriage and to promote access to education by adolescents. For example, respondents mentioned that Imams started paying attention to the age and the consents of girls for the marriage to be carried out, and there were accounts of leaders participating in the prevention of child marriages by convincing the families of its harmful effects. There are also accounts of leaders being reached out to get involved in talking to families to support adolescents to go to school (see Section 4.4.5).

5.3.10 Conclusion

Though it is clear that sensitisation of RLs/CLs, parents, and communities took place, there is considerable unevenness in the extent to which it translated into the final outcome. As IALA managed to use Islamic teachings to centre its messaging on child rights, it could to a large extent circumvent societal resistance. However, it is evident that each message was interpreted differently and met with different levels of commitment by each category of respondents. There is almost universal appreciation of the importance of education for the future of children, though most stakeholders acknowledged that economic realities may affect a person's access to education. This is especially important, as the support for adolescent education is for both boys and girls, where girls have been affected much more by societal norms on education. In contrast, child marriage is a topic that shows different levels of acceptance by distinct stakeholder groups. RLs have the view that marriages should only happen after puberty, while parents tend to have the view that adolescents should only get married after the legal age. There is some evidence that adolescents are included in decision-making, however parents continue to be the ones taking the final decision. Early pregnancy was not found to be very salient among respondents with those who mentioned it, typically referring to it as one among many problems caused by child marriage, which reflects the social norms of pregnancy and marriage being linked inextricably. Even though awareness of communities about children's rights seems to have been raised as a result of IALA's activities, especially considering that these were mostly new topics for community members, not all have embraced these ideas.

6 EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS

The summative evaluation of IALA aimed to improve our understanding of how and to what extent the programme's intended outputs and outcomes have materialised, and to better appreciate the mechanisms and processes that have led to this. The analysis focused on programme theory validation, programme implementation, and adolescent empowerment, which were cross-checked by five key evaluation criteria: relevance, fidelity/coherence, coverage, effectiveness, and sustainability. Another key objective of the evaluation was to identify key barriers and impediments to the realisation of outcomes, lessons learned, and best practices, and to offer recommendations for future programming.

The evaluation went through several hurdles, from delays in its original implementation plan due to the rising insecurities leading up to the political transition to Taliban rule in August 2021, to the adjustment of data collection methods and outreach strategies to ensure feasibility in a highly complex and fragile context, as the study was carried out just a few months into the political transition. Nonetheless, all planned data collection sessions were completed, and a significant amount of data was collected in both target provinces.

Regarding Outcome 1 of IALA, the findings show that adolescents were able to communicate with each other, their families and sometimes with community leaders, although communication with policy makers could not be established. Adolescents acted as agents of change for peers in their communities, campaigning outside the MAGs to promote access to education and the prevention of child marriages. They did this via different means, including peer to peer mentoring, reaching out to the families in their communities, and sometimes talking to community or religious leaders to help them solve problems. They also carried out various awareness raising campaigns and other social actions, like theatre plays. There is also evidence that the most effective communication occurred not through the use of technological aids or radio but rather through activities such as peer-to-peer outreach, door to door and artistic activities.

Adolescents learned several new skills and increased their awareness on their rights, which they described not to have had before. The qualitative evidence, in combination with the midline findings, suggests a stronger increase in awareness of the importance of education, and some increase in awareness of the problem of early marriage, with early pregnancy seen as a subset of this problem. Illiterate children had more difficulties in accessing and retaining the contents of the trainings, although this was partially addressed by revising teaching to be more visual and engaging through the use of practical approaches, which also improved the learning for those who were literate. An unexpected benefit was that illiterate children were motivated to become literate as a result of MAG. Some of the biggest benefits were in the area of life skills, with many participants mentioning that they developed an understanding of the importance of self-esteem, goal setting, and decision making. Listening to radio did not play any significant role in this outcome, though participation in community radio created a major improvement in the participants' self-confidence and communication skills.

Regarding Outcome 2, though sensitisation of RLs/CLs, parents and communities took place, there is considerable unevenness in the extent to which it translated into the final outcome. As IALA managed to use Islamic teachings to centre its messaging on child rights, it could circumvent societal resistance. However, it is evident that each message was interpreted differently and met with different levels of commitment by each category of respondents. There is almost universal appreciation of the importance of education for the future of children, though most stakeholders acknowledged that economic realities may affect a person's access to education. This is especially important, as the support for adolescent education is for both boys and girls, whereby girls have been much more negatively affected by societal norms on education. However, child marriage is a topic which shows different levels of acceptance by distinct stakeholder groups. RLs/CLs tend to have the view that marriages should only happen after puberty, while parents tend to have the view that adolescents should only get married after the legal age. There is some evidence that adolescents are included in decision-making, yet parents continue to be the ones taking the final decision. Early pregnancy was not found to be very salient among respondents with those who mentioned it, typically mentioning it as one among the many problems caused by child marriage, which reflects the social norms of pregnancy and marriage being linked inextricably. Even though awareness of communities about children's rights seems to have been raised as a result of IALA's activities, especially considering that these were mostly new topics for community members, not all have embraced these ideas.

Qualitative data did not allow for any findings regarding adolescents' access to services, and the third pillar was not a focus of this evaluation. Moreover, decision making still largely lies in the family realm, hence leaders do not have a lot of influence on it. Overall, however, there is evidence that especially religious leaders focus more on getting adolescents' consent to marriages, that they are approachable and available for support when adolescents seek their assistance to solve problems and that the relation between adolescents' and community members has improved. This partly interlinks with outcome 1, which showed that adolescents became more confident and able to express themselves and to stand up for their views.

IALA's programme implementation faced several challenges emanating from both the contexts in which the activities were conducted and from design and operational aspects. On the one hand, these challenges were

connected to communities' traditional social and gender norms and the characteristics of their contexts and practices, which presented difficulties for engaging adolescents and community members and for sharing the messages from the programme. These challenges included: the need for gender-segregated MAG structures in some areas due to socio-cultural traditions; some communities' resistance to changing views and behaviours towards adolescents' rights, particularly at the beginning of the intervention and in more remote and/or rural areas; child labour that limited attendance and participation, particularly of vulnerable adolescents; and high numbers of illiteracy, which called for design changes to training and introduced difficulties to MAG operations. On the other hand, there were also challenges connected to the programme's operations, which included a limited budget for community activities and no budget for MAG premises; some delays in the implementation of community-level activities (development of action plans), a limited engagement of parents in MAG activities; and a potentially insufficient adaptability to the needs of vulnerable adolescents in MAG structure and mentoring.

7 LESSONS LEARNED

Beyond programme implementation and the extent to which IALA achieved its outcomes as they were set out, there are several important themes that the programme put in place and that are relevant to highlight here, including relevant lessons learnt for addressing adolescent protection and empowerment.

Firstly, as the first programme directed at adolescents in Afghanistan, IALA developed a unique content and design, and created an important boost to awareness raising for the rights and protection of adolescents in the country, to both target communities and government counterparts. IALA put adolescents at the centre of the intervention and promoted their empowerment not only through raising awareness of their rights but also through providing relevant and applicable skills that adolescents could relate to and incorporate to improve their circumstances and contexts. Moreover, IALA brought about a practical approach to teaching and learning which was instructional not only by way of contents but also in the practical experience of the MAGs; adolescents' learning experience was boosted first-hand by having a key role in the MAG structure and organisation, as well as by becoming peer educators from the get-go. MAGs' practical approach, although different from school, was considered complementary, useful, highly valued and something that adolescents had not seen before. Contents were both new and relevant to their target population.

Furthermore, IALA deployed a holistic approach to the three interrelated problems it sought to tackle (child marriage, child pregnancy, school enrolment), by way of approaching and engaging a wide variety of stakeholders which proved of relevance to the promotion of adolescent empowerment, accompanied by a wide set of strategies. Parents are key decision makers, and their support was found to be paramount for adolescents to not only be able to participate in activities but also to engage and have better performance in their learning outcomes. Community and religious leaders have key roles of influence in their communities, and thus getting their engagement to prevent harmful practices is of extreme importance at community level.

Finally, the programme was highly valued by all stakeholder groups for raising awareness of adolescents' rights, providing them skills and self-confidence, and promoting their community participation. External factors, specifically the political transition to the Taliban administration, have brought about changing regulations for education and female empowerment that preoccupy participants. These effects had a big impact in limiting the continuation of activities after the programme ended. However, participants expressed a desire for continuing their education and learning, and for the programme to continue if possible.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Using the findings from the 90 qualitative interviews conducted with different sets of respondents, we have first tried to gain an in-depth understanding of the IALA and its implementation. As a summative evaluation, this is also an opportunity to reflect on the (perceived) successes and failure of IALA by beneficiaries and implementers. Our interview guides were created keeping in mind the findings from the midline evaluation and thus add depth to the results of that study, in addition to gaining new insights that are only possible in retrospect. Considering the dramatically changed socio-political context in Afghanistan following the political transition in 2021, it is difficult to offer recommendations that are very specific to Afghanistan. As the findings here are also intended to be used as inputs into the IALA synthesis report for South Asia, below we rank the recommendations in the order of their generalisability to other contexts and future redesign of similar programmes. Following the narrative description and the rationale below, we also list the recommendations in tabular form.

Consider the target groups' economic realities in programme design: Poverty was systematically recognized by stakeholders as a key challenge in adolescents' contexts, particularly in the present situation of Afghanistan and as a factor related to harmful practices, such as the prevalence of early marriage and child labour. In view of the high impact of poverty and overall economic conditions on MAG members' attendance, engagement, and uptake, the incorporation of economic factors in the approach of UNICEF towards adolescent empowerment is recommended for the next programming cycle. This can include targeted measures to support vulnerable adolescents to be able to take part, the incorporation of specific methodologies and activities to compensate for any long or frequent absences (e.g., a systematic peer support system in their villages), and/or the consideration of these practices in the design and structure of the MAGs as a whole. Addressing economic factors can also be done by combining IALA interventions with other UNICEF actions targeting, for example, employability and financial support, to enhance impact.

Explore potential linkages with government actors and the private sector for supporting options of setting up more higher learning courses, TVET classes, or alternative approaches, such as livelihood trainings accessible for girls: Limited access to and insufficient availability of learning opportunities for girls, particularly higher classes, was identified as one key barrier to female empowerment. It is advisable to explore options, potentially together with government actors like the MoE and private sector organisations, to offer more gender-separate courses at higher learning institutions, TVET classes, or alternative learning approaches, such as livelihood trainings (in combination with literacy trainings). Any of these options should be purposely designed to suit the interests and needs of female adolescents and combined with continuous awareness raising on the benefits of girls' education and training (hence income opportunities for families). Such education and training options should not only be offered within cities, but also and especially in more remote areas. Another possibility is to link community-based education (CBE)/Accelerating Learning Centres (ALC) for out-of-school MAG members to enrol, capitalising on the MAG platform and the interest it promotes in schooling.

Strengthen trainers' preparation for teaching illiterate children and mixed groups: The programme took useful steps in the adaptation of its teaching methods and materials to better fit the capabilities of illiterate adolescents that constituted significant numbers of MAG members. From the evidence collected through interviews, mentors still faced challenges in overcoming the situation of teaching illiterate children effectively as well as for managing the mixed teams of literate and illiterate adolescents, with their differing needs for support. Further specific trainings may be recommended for the future on these challenges and how best to approach them.

Ensure systematic engagement of key adults, particularly parents, through targeted activities/educational programmes: Engaging the adults in adolescents' lives is key for their empowerment, considering the present role that adolescents have in their communities and their families, and the importance of parents and other influential community adults for their participation, decision making and possibilities of better programme uptake. In IALA activities, key adults' level and regularity of participation varied greatly, which depended on several factors including knowledge received on activities, level of involvement in youth's lives, understanding of their role in MAGs, etc. Considering these factors, more systematic involvement of parents and strengthened community participation is recommended for future programming, to ensure that any initial distrust/reticence is overcome from the outset and that learning outcomes and community outreach activities' impacts are enhanced. We propose that this is done by: i) incorporating parents in educational activities/programmes, specifically designed keeping them in mind, to ensure higher levels of participation and advocacy in the promotion of adolescents' learning; ii) plan for a more systematic and regular participation of religious leaders and influential community members.

Plan for enhancements to training and cascade learning through longer-term, spaced out, and varied incorporation of contents and inclusion of adolescents in design: In order to ensure a continued engagement of MAG members and better cope with contingencies related to absences, life skills trainings and other trainings can be provided in a more spaced out and varied manner throughout the programme's implementation. The longer-term model might also support the internalization of contents and the development of teaching and learning practices and create possibilities for an expanded variety of teaching contents and for longer-term engagements of non-MAG members through systematic support approaches (e.g., mentoring). This can be one way of potentially strengthening cascade learning. Furthermore, on the basis of adolescents' experience, systems to track learning through the cascade approach could be revised, as it appears they did not comprehensively reflect adolescents' knowledge sharing practices. The involvement of adolescents in design could help to both further tailor training contents to their needs and to improve the cascade learning approach, building on adolescents' wide set of experiences and knowledge gained on this regard.

Establish closer programme monitoring by UNICEF with centralised oversight of monitoring data: Monitoring systems for activities were established and followed by the implementing partners, according to all programme implementers interviewed. However, the challenges faced by the evaluation in obtaining monitoring data per intervention and village and some issues in data quality (e.g., inconsistencies in lists of participants, lack of digitalisation of data on training attendance, etc.), point to the fact that UNICEF would benefit from a closer involvement in programme monitoring data and in design/monitoring of tracking tools.

Reconsider the channels used for messaging: The use of mosques as part of the messaging strategy is supported by the qualitative evidence. In contrast, radio appears to have played an insignificant role in terms of listener engagement. In the future, other media more frequently used by adolescents should be considered if feasible, especially television, the SMS platform and/or Internet for adolescents who have phones. Community-based artistic and sporting activities proved to be very engaging as well, but the current feasibility of these need to be explored on a case-by-case basis and according to the fluid situation under the current administration, before being considered feasible.

Provide a specific budget for MAG premises and plan for an increase of budgeting for community activities: Although community resources and groups' entrepreneurial spirits played a key role in the success of MAGs, and this engagement was a commendable feature of the programme, setting up some basic support measures can help the groups to better 'stand on their feet', particularly when conditions and contexts are more adverse, as well as potentiate impacts of their activities. This could include the rental of a suitable space for meetings (with proper conditions in the wintertime) and the provision of targeted support for community outreach activities of interest to all MAG members. Moreover, the dedication of higher budgets for community development plans is recommended to keep momentum and engagement of community members and allow communities to develop activities of higher impact.

Plan for programme continuation and expansion to neighbouring villages: The qualitative study found a strong interest and enthusiasm for the programme from all participants involved, as well as a preoccupation from some actors on the potential loss of the advances gained and the awareness raised in community members should the activities not continue in the future. This is of particular relevance in the current context of Afghanistan under the Taliban rule, the uncertainty around social expectations and rights, in particular girls' education. Requests for activities for the promotion of education and literacy were strongly expressed by parents and adolescents interviewed. Considering the insufficient communication found with regard to all criteria for joining the MAG, a revision of the process of involvement of MAG members is recommended, to enhance transparency and ensure that all those who are interested in taking part in the MAG are considered.

Table 3 List of recommendations

No.	Stage	Key criteria	Proposed Recommendation	Responsible	Timeline	Report Section
Priority 1						
1	Programme design	Coverage Effectiveness	Consider the target groups' economic realities in programme design	UNICEF ACO	Medium	4.3.1 4.3.2 4.3.3 4.4
2	Programme design	Relevance Sustainability	Explore potential linkages with government actors and the private sector for supporting options of setting up more higher learning courses, TVET classes, or alternative approaches, such as livelihood training accessible for girls, to address barriers to female empowerment	UNICEF ACO / MoE / private sector	Medium	4.1.2 4.3.2 4.4.8
3	Programme implementation	Relevance Coverage Effectiveness	Strengthen trainers' preparation for teaching illiterate children and mixed groups, including disabled children	AKF/WVA	Medium	4.1.3 4.3.3 4.4
Priority 2						
4	Programme design	Fidelity/ Coherence Coverage Effectiveness	Ensure systematic engagement of key adults, particularly parents, through targeted activities/educational programmes	UNICEF ACO	Medium	4.2 4.3.3 4.4
5	Programme implementation	Coverage Effectiveness	Plan for enhancements to training and cascade learning through longer-term, spaced out, and varied incorporation of contents and inclusion of adolescents in design to boost engagement	AKF/WVA	Short	4.3.1 4.4
6	M&E Structure, Functions & Capabilities	Fidelity/ Coherence	Establish closer programme monitoring by UNICEF with centralised oversight of monitoring data	UNICEF ACO	Short	4.2.7
Priority 3						
7	Programme Implementation	Relevance	Reconsider the channels used for messaging	AKF/WVA	Short	4.1.6
8	Programme implementation	Relevance	Provide a specific budget for MAG premises and plan for an increase of budgeting for community activities	UNICEF ACO	Medium	4.1.5
9	Programme implementation	Sustainability	Plan for programme continuation and expansion to neighbouring villages	UNICEF ACO AKF/WVA	Medium	4.5

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asia Foundation (2018) A Survey of the Afghan People. Retrieved from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018_Afghan-Survey_fullReport-12.4.18.pdf
- Beach, D and Pedersen, R (2013). *Process Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. University of Michigan Press.
- Befani, B., & Stedman-Bryce, G. (2017). Process Tracing and Bayesian Updating for impact evaluation. *Evaluation*, 23(1), 42–60.
- Blum, R. W., Li, M., Pasha, O., Rao, C., & Natiq, K. (2019). Coming of Age in the Shadow of the Taliban: Education, Child Marriage, and the Future of Afghanistan From the Perspectives of Adolescents and Their Parents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 64(3), pp. 370-375.
- Central Statistics Organisation (CSO). (2017). Demographic statistics – population. Retrieved from CSO: <http://cso.gov.af/en/page/demography-and-social-statistics/demograph-statistics/3897111>
- Central Statistics Organisation (CSO) (2011). Bamyán Socio-Demographic and Economic Survey. Afghanistan. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/English-SDES%20Bamiyan%20Highlights%2C%20Bamiyan.pdf>
- Frölich, Nikravech, M.; Rivièrè, A.; Pasha, A. & Ahlborn, L. (2019). ROSA ADAP Knowledge Management: Afghanistan Country Report. Center for Evaluation and Development C4ED.
- George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.
- Gläser, J., & Laudel, G. (2019) The Discovery of Causal Mechanisms: Extractive Qualitative Content Analysis as a Tool for Process Tracing. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 20(3), Art. 29
- Li, M.; Rao, K.; Natiq, N.; Pasha, O.; Blum, R. (2018) Coming of Age in the Shadow of the Taliban: Adolescents' and Parents' Views Toward Interpersonal Violence and Harmful Traditional Practices in Afghanistan. *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 12: pp. 1688-1694.
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (1/26/2004): The Constitution of Afghanistan (Article 43).
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education (2012): Policy Guidelines for Community-Based Education.
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education (2016): National Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021.
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education (2018): Community Based Education Guidelines.
- Mahoney, J. (2012). The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences. *Sociological Methods & Research* 41, 570–597.
- Ministry of Education; Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; UNICEF; USAID; Samuel Hall (2018): All in School and Learning: Global Initiative on Out-Of-School Children - Afghanistan Country Study. Afghanistan Country Study. Kabul.
- MoLSA; UNICEF (2018): Child Marriage in Afghanistan: Changing the narrative. Knowledge attitude and practice study.
- MRRD (2010). Provincial Development Plan: Badghis Provincial Profile. (2010). Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20101202130249/http://www.mrrd.gov.af/nabdp/Provincial%20Profiles/Badghis%20PDP%20Provincial%20profile.pdf>
- Pfaffenbach, C. & Reuber, P. (2005): *Methoden der empirischen Humangeographie*. Das Geographische Seminar, Westermann, München.
- Sachs, J., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G. and Woelm, F. (2021): *Sustainable Development Report 2021*, Cambridge University Press.

- Schmitt, J. & Beach, D. (2015). The contribution of process tracing to theory-based evaluations of complex aid instruments. *Evaluation*, 21(4), 429–447.
- Stith, S., Pruitt, I., Dees, J., Fronce, M., Green, N., Som, A. and Linkh, D. (2006) Implementing community-based prevention programming: A review of the literature. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 27(6), pp.599-617.
- UNEG (2014). Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations. Retrieved from: www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616
- UNFPA Afghanistan. (2021). Child marriage. Retrieved from <https://afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/node/15233>
- UNICEF (2018) Child Marriage in Afghanistan: Changing the Narrative. Retrieved from <http://afg-report-Child Marriage in Afghanistan.pdf> (unicef.org)
- UNICEF ROSA (2019). Afghanistan Education Equity Profile for Adolescent Girls. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/sites/unicef.org/rosa/files/2020>
- UNICEF (2021a). Child marriage. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>
- UNICEF (2021b). Improving Adolescents' Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) Final Progress Report
- UNICEF. (2022). Afghanistan snapshot, UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeal. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/media/112576/file/2022-HAC-Afghanistan.pdf>
- Van Hemelrijck, A., & Guijt, I. (2016). Balancing inclusiveness, rigour and feasibility: Insights from participatory impact evaluations in Ghana and Vietnam (CDI Practice Paper No. 14). Institute for Development Studies, Brighton.
- White, H., & Phillips, D. (2012). *Addressing attribution of cause and effect in small n impact evaluations: Towards an integrated framework* (Working Paper No. 15). International Initiative for Impact Evaluation.
- World Population Review (2022). <https://worldpopulationreview.com/>
- World Bank. (2021). Afghanistan Overview. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview#1>

ANNEXES

1. Terms of Reference
2. Evaluation matrix
3. List of interviewees
4. List of site visits
5. Data collection instruments (interview questionnaires)
6. List of documentary evidence
7. Research Ethics Approval

ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of the Programme on Improving Adolescents' Lives in Afghanistan (IALA)

1. Background¹

Adolescence, defined by the United Nations as the period between the ages of 10-19 years, ushers in the transition from childhood to adulthood – a period when many critical factors influence foundations for adult life. In South Asia, adolescents make up 20 percent of the total population. In Afghanistan, out of a total of 27 million people there are approximately 13 million children between 0-14 and 5.1 million are adolescents and youth.

Despite the recent developments in creating opportunities for adolescents in the past decade, several challenges remain that impede their ability to participate in community life and express their opinions in social settings, including at home and school on issues that impact their lives. In particular, protracted conflicts that continuously destabilize the socio-economic and political structure of the country, also limit opportunities for adolescents to develop. The conflicts in Afghanistan have caused displacements exposing adolescents to psycho-social harm and increase their vulnerability to violence, abuse and exploitation. Living in a conflict affected insecure environment deprives children of several rights: lack of safety and security, and lack of education following the destruction of the education system during the Taliban regime. Although access to education for children has gradually improved in Afghanistan, the security situation and adversely changed social systems have created limited safe spaces for children and adolescents, especially girls, to interact outside of their homes.

At present, boys and girls remain vulnerable to gender-based violence and abuse in Afghanistan. Many forms of violence and harmful practices experienced by adolescents are manifestations of social norms and lack of understanding about their long-term negative implications. For example, a practice called “bacha bazi” perpetrated by warlords – where young boys are kept as consorts and subjected to slavery and sexual abuse – is prevalent in some parts of the country. Adolescents are also exposed to other harmful practices; “baad” is an exchange of young girls to resolve family disputes where girls are often treated like slaves and forced to marry much older men, “badal” is exchange marriage to save the dowry to be paid to the boy’s family leading to many cases of forced child marriage and “shikham bakshi” marries children off before they are born. In addition, girls who run away from home are considered criminals and face detention or violent forms of punishment. Several case studies highlight the health and protection risks faced by adolescents in vulnerable situations; working on the streets, being deported from neighbouring countries, in detention for petty or political crimes or adolescents addicted to drugs.

The second decade of life is a critical opportunity to break the inter-generational cycle of multiple deprivation in a much shorter time frame, compared to the first decade that requires a much longer perspective. Adolescents have the potential to become change makers and can contribute to eliminating society’s greatest challenges that negatively affect their lives. UNICEF is committed to contributing to fostering an enabling environment and increasing opportunities for adolescents to develop and have equal chances to pursue their individual and educational goals. For the first time, UNICEF has taken a regional approach to addressing the issues facing adolescents in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan with ***the goal of improving the lives of adolescents by increasing their over decisions affecting their lives***. With financial support from The IKEA Foundation (IF), UNICEF is in the process of implementing a multi-country programme focusing on improving adolescents’ lives through grassroots activities and social mobilization targeting harmful traditional practices. The programme will be implemented through a three-pillar approach²:

- i. Adolescents are agents of change for themselves and their communities;
- ii. Families, communities and decision makers protect adolescents from rights abuses;
- iii. Public services and authorities uphold adolescents’ rights to ensure their protection, health and education.

Using the three-pillar approach, UNICEF aims at contributing to the strategic result of the programme:

- Increase the self-efficacy of adolescents, particularly girls to reduce their vulnerability to violence perpetrated through harmful practices and nurture their ability to act as agents of change in their communities.

The corresponding programme on Improving Adolescents’ Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) covers two provinces, Badghis and Bamyán. The programme aims to reach all adolescents in these provinces, effectively 25% of the population in each province. Some 655,580 adolescents (50% female and 50% male) are expected to be reached through this programme, with the following main results expected to be achieved by 2020:

- i. Percentage reduction of women married at the age of 15 in the target provinces;
- ii. Percentage increase of gross enrolment in secondary education in the target provinces;
- iii. Percentage decrease in adolescent pregnancy.

The programme is expected to enable adolescents to participate in community activities and platforms for advocating their own rights, especially of girls, to choose when and whom to marry; when and how many children to have; and pursue their educational goals. Empowerment activities include communication strategies towards increasing opportunities for adolescents to engage not only in community activities, but also actively participate in sports and live healthy lifestyles. Along with empowering adolescents to express their voices, the programme will

also use existing national systems – including local governments, community development initiatives, schools, faith-based organizations, etc. – to enhance adolescents’ knowledge of child protection issues and increase their ability to identify and know what to do when they face violent behaviour.

UNICEF is committed to transparency and accountability in bringing about positive changes in the lives of children and their families. To ensure that the combined efforts of UNICEF and IF under the IALA programme, an evaluation, including a baseline and endline survey of the programme, will be conducted.

2. Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of the endline evaluation is to gather evidence that will inform the Government, IF, UNICEF and other stakeholders on the results and lessons learned of the programme. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation will be used to improve programming for adolescents and scale up similar programmes in other provinces, if possible. They will also feed into efforts at the level of the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), to compile lessons learned across the three countries that are part of the broader multi-country initiative.

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess **five** main aspects embedded of the programme, namely (i) relevance, (ii) fidelity/coherence, (iii) coverage, (iv) effectiveness and (v) sustainability of the intervention, to identify lessons learned and make recommendations accordingly.

3. Evaluation Scope and Main Questions

The evaluation was originally conceived as a quasi-experimental impact evaluation, covering four provinces. A limited baseline survey was already conducted as part of the planned impact evaluation, some of the data of which can be used to partially populate the “impact table”, which constitutes the programme’s results and monitoring framework. The planned impact evaluation was discontinued for a range of reasons, including the precarious security situation in two of the four provinces originally selected and well as the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In the meantime, programme implementation has commenced in the two remaining provinces, Bamyan and Badghis. The endline evaluation will cover the implementation period of the programme, i.e. 2017-2020.

The evaluation of the programme will therefore cover all districts of Bamyan and Badghis.

The evaluation will include the participation of adolescents, families, communities, schools, teachers, religious leaders, shuras and Government stakeholders. It will address the structure of the programme’s Theory of Change (ToC) and its assumptions to understand how the programme validation evolved in relation to the five aspects abovementioned. Then, it will turn to several aspects of the programme implementation phases. The evaluation will assess the delivery of the programme activities along with approaches adopted in mainstreaming equity, gender equality and human rights into programme implementation. Finally, it will focus specifically on adolescent empowerment, and especially girls’ empowerment, to evaluate how the programme uplifted adolescents’ participation in decisions affecting their lives in the two regions of Bamyan and Badghis.

The evaluation will mainly focus on the programme deliverables. Since the evaluation will be based solely on a qualitative data collection, findings will not be generalizable. They will, however, provide more insights into the results produced by the midline evaluation. Therefore, the following groups will be involved in the study:

- Peer life skills training trainers;
- Multipurpose Adolescent Group (MAG) members;
- Adolescents
- Parents
- Community/religious leaders

The evaluation team is required to develop a set of research questions, based on the main evaluation criteria to be applied in the evaluation. The three main domains of the evaluation will comprise the following: (i) *Programme Validation Theory*; (ii) *Programme Implementation*; (iii) *Adolescent Empowerment*. In each of these three domains, the validation will focus on the five main aspects of *relevance, fidelity/coherence, coverage, effectiveness, sustainability*.

These aspects are defined and include the following (indicative) questions³:

Relevance: the ways in which the programme met the needs of adolescents, especially of girls, as well as the developmental and programmematic priorities of Afghanistan; and the extent to which it is aligned with UNICEF’s corporate Strategic Framework and Country Programme. Some examples include:

- How relevant were the MAG supervisors’ profiles and the trainers’ skills to ensure the smooth running of the IALA activities as per the ToC?
- Was the content of the broadcasting New Homes New Lives drama on radio relevant to support the IALA’s achievement of its outcomes and goals?
- Was the literacy rate high enough to access the information provided during the CL/RL trainings and the life skills, self-expression?

Fidelity/Coherence: the extent to which delivery of the IALA intervention adhered to the protocols and programme model originally developed as well as the coherence to local cultural norms unlocking the programme's potential. Some examples include:

- Were the activities proposed in line with the local cultural norms and approved and encouraged by parents, local community elders and government/non-government elements?
- Were the trainings for RLs on child rights in Islam well received by the local communities? Were they coherent to the IALA's programme objectives without being insensitive to the local cultural norms in Badghis and Bamiyan provinces?
- Were all activities created in time and in full amount?

Coverage: The extent to which the programme reached its intended target population. Some examples include:

- Were there enough in-school and out of school adolescents in a village to create a MAG?
- Were all groups of community members allowed and interested to take part in the trainings and community meetings, including women?
- Did the Sports for Development and Arts for Development manage to reach both boys and girls in the communities where they were implemented?

Effectiveness: The extent to which the programme contributed to empowering adolescents and increasing their abilities to act as the agents of change.

- Were the programmes created effectively tapping into the requests, wishes and needs of the youth involved in the MAGs and the sub-committees?
- Were the life-skills trainings for MAG-members considered effective by the youth to equip them with enough tools to face the challenges that they have identified at the beginning of the programme?
- Were trainings provided to community leaders effective? Did they and the entire community notice any meaningful change in how youth issues are dealt at the community level?

Sustainability: The extent to which the programme's interventions are sustainable.

- Were funds for creating life skills modules, sports kits etc. financially sustainable to be supported over the length of the whole programme?
- Have activities proved sustainable throughout the whole duration of the programme so to ensure that elders, parents and influential individuals from the community support adolescents to access services, participate in decision making and prevent exposure to harmful traditional practices?
- Were the village premises suitable to host all the MAG activities over the long term?

Overall, the evaluation is expected to adopt an equity, gender equality and human rights-based approach. This approach will need to be integrated in detailed formulation of evaluation questions under each of the above-mentioned evaluation domains and criteria.

The programme is not designed to demonstrate developmental changes that can be directly attributed to it (impact). Therefore, the evaluation will not seek to determine impact in this sense. Also, impact, understood as long-term developmental changes in the lives of right holders will not be determined as part of this evaluation, since the programme lifespan covers only 3-4 years. The extent to which the programme has contributed to observable developmental changes at the outcome levels, will be ascertained as part of the effectiveness criterion.

4. Evaluability

The theory of change of the IALA programme is aligned with the theory of change of the broader multi-country programme. While the theory of change was built on available information in Afghanistan, there are significant attribution gaps pertaining, in particular, to the achievement of impact-level results. Intended results at the outcome level, based on the delivery of planned outputs, are deemed evaluable by this endline evaluation, however only to the extent permitted by a limited qualitative data collection. The evaluation team will validate the existing theory of change prior to designing the evaluation.

5. Limitations

Challenges may arise in terms of security and limited access to the target groups, as well as the current COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, timely implementation of data collection activities may be affected by the remoteness of some of the districts. Limitations may also be linked to data collection in the context of sensitive ethnic, religious, cultural and tribal norms of the target population, though the evaluation should seek to mitigate related risks as much as possible. In this regard, ensuring a thorough knowledge of stakeholders prior to launching the evaluation, and adapting methods of engagement, is essential.

6. Evaluation Methods

As agreed upon by UNICEF and C4ED, the endline evaluation of the IALA programme will be solely based on a qualitative exercise. Therefore, this evaluation will not be as comprehensive in scope as those carried out in other

comparable national contexts currently included in similar UNICEF ROSA programmes. As a result, the set of questions that can be answered from the IALA Afghanistan, for the synthesis work at the end of the three country evaluations is limited and generally non-causal. However, the qualitative data collection will contribute to exploring some of the most important findings and gaps identified during the IALA midline evaluation.

The detailed evaluation design will be finalized during the inception phase, and will draw significantly on existing secondary data as well as previous and ongoing engagement with UNICEF and other key stakeholders. During the evaluation, data will be collected from the following target populations:

- Adolescents;
- Families, communities and other decision makers;
- Public authorities
- Service providers

Primary qualitative data collection methods

- Focus group discussions
- Semi-structured interviews
- Key Informant Interviews
- Direct observations

This qualitative work, which is to be considered as the best option that C4ED can provide given the budget and the timeframe set by UNICEF, will be the only component of the IALA's summative evaluation. Therefore, the evaluation report will draw solely on desk based research, primary qualitative data and secondary data sources.

Secondary data collection methods

Secondary data can be collected through the programme baseline database; programme documents and available education sector databases (such as EMIS) from the Ministry of Education and UNICEF. The programme documents that can be obtained from UNICEF are:

- The programme description
- Logical Framework
- Monitoring Framework
- Programme action plan/intervention activities
- Programme communication strategies for development.

Sampling

The evaluation team is responsible for developing the most appropriate sampling approach. The sample sizes should – to the extent feasible - be sufficient to provide in-depth insights into the results of the IALA programme from the point of view of its beneficiaries. Given time and cost constraints, sample sizes may need to be modest.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools (IDIs, KIIs, and FGD protocols) must be culturally appropriate, and should adhere to guidance on Ethical Research Involving Children.⁴ The form and contents of the data collection tools should be sufficient for capturing correct information on the main indicators of the programme and deliver adequate level of analysis that will illustrate a measurable change. In-Depth Interviews, Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with sampled groups must be anonymous, in the local language and documented with consent of the interviewees. The research protocol should be subject to a formal ethical review.

Data Analysis and Findings

Data of the baseline, midterm survey and evaluation must be disaggregated by gender, location, ethnicity, language, ages of respondents and other relevant determinants of inequity deemed appropriate. The effect of the programme will be determined by looking the extent to which the programme contributed to increasing enrolment in secondary education among adolescents, and assessing – to the extent possible - its contribution to decreasing child marriage and pregnancies among adolescents.

7. Evaluation Management

The evaluation will be managed by the Research & Evaluation Specialist at UNICEF ACO under the supervision of the Chief of the Social Policy, Evaluation & Research (SPEAR) Section. SPEAR Section will lead the evaluation process and assure the quality and independence of the evaluation process and that it is conducted according to the UNICEF Evaluation Policy and UNEG Norms and Standards. An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) consisting of key internal and external programme stakeholders will be formed to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders in the design and scope of the evaluation, raising awareness of the different information needs, providing quality assurance throughout the process, and in supporting the dissemination of evaluation results. Its inputs

are expected to strengthen the quality and credibility of the evaluation. The evaluation team will be accountable to Evaluation Management as to how ERG comments are addressed during reporting.

8. Deliverables and timelines

Approximate budget: \$ 100,000

A. Summative Evaluation, June-September 2021 Budget: \$ 100,000				
The allocated time for the evaluation is 15 weeks. The evaluation team is required to develop a work plan for 15 weeks.				
#	Item	Duration	Payment	
1	Inception/Research Design Phase			
1.1	Draft of Research Matrix	4 weeks	After submission of the data collection tools	20 %
1.2	Sampling of data collection locations			
1.3	Tools translation			
1.4	Preparation for training			
2	Data Collection and Analysis Phase			
2.1	Finalization of data collection logistics	6 weeks	After submission of all interview transcriptions, audios and informed consent forms as well as a brief summary of preliminary findings	40 %
2.2	Training of local researchers			
2.3	Sampling of participants (IDIs and KIIs)			
2.4	Pilot 1 st round (3IDIs, 1-2 KIIs, 1 FGD)			
2.5	Debrief and adaptation of tools for 2 nd round			
2.6	Data collection 2 nd round (IDIs, FGDs and KIIs)			
2.7	Monitoring of data collection			
2.8	Transcriptions			
3	Analysis of data and report writing			
3.1	Coding	5 weeks	After submission of final evaluation report and presentation.	40 %
3.2	Analysis			
3.3	Development of draft report (C4ED)			
3.4	Integration of feedback by UNICEF			
3.5	Final Report Submission			

ANNEX 2. EVALUATION MATRIX

Research topic	Rationale midline	Sub-Questions	Source of information	Assumptions	Indicators / benchmarks
<p>1. Programme Theory Validation</p>	<p>In the IALA midline and baseline data, approximately 45% of the adolescents identify bad quality of education as a major concern, and 36% think that the absence of schools is also a challenge. In total, around 66% of the adolescents thought that barriers to education were a major challenge they face.</p> <p>Moreover, around 16% of the interviewed adolescents consider early marriage to be one of the major difficulties in general, while 26% also name child labour as one of the issues they face</p> <p>In the IALA baseline and midline data, the three main channels to learn about rights and entitlements are friends and family (51%), mosque (41%) and TV (20%). Therefore, radio is not necessarily a popular medium of instruction.</p>	<p>i. Relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How relevant were the MAG supervisors' profiles and the trainers' skills to ensure the smooth running of the IALA activities as per the ToC? Was the content of the broadcasting <i>New Homes New Lives</i> drama on radio relevant to support the IALA's achievement of its outcomes and goals? Was the literacy rate high enough to access the information provided during the CL/RL trainings and the life skills, self-expression? <p>ii. Fidelity/Coherence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the activities proposed in line with the local cultural norms and approved and encouraged by parents, local community elders and government/non-government elements? Were the trainings for RLs on child rights in Islam well received by the local communities? Were they coherent to the IALA's programme objectives without being insensitive to the local cultural norms in Badghis and Bamyán provinces? Were all activities created in time and in full amount? Were trainings for influential community members comprehensive enough to positively influence their views on adolescents and harmful traditional practices? Are the governmental/non-governmental organisations and institutions acting upon the communicated problems? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing agencies (AKF + WVA) UNICEF regional staff Adolescents (boys and girls, MAG members) Parents Community leaders 	<p>There are premises in a village (or nearby), which could serve as a suitable venue for MAG activities</p> <p>All activities are delivered in time and in full amount, and do not suffer from inadequate resources, for e.g. books and chalk</p>	<p>Reported satisfaction of beneficiaries with training content and delivery, premises and trainers</p> <p>High attendance rate and few to no challenges in participation</p>

	<p>It is vital that the literacy rate among CLs/RLs is high enough to access the information provided during these trainings (and being able to refer to it again, as it is essential for the knowledge dissemination). Based on the current data, at midline, 82% of the CLs can write with or without any help, and only 17% cannot write at all. Moreover, out of those CLs, who can write, 93% can also read.</p> <p>Finally, it is supposed that the services for the adolescents indeed exist and are relatively accessible. For instance, for the adolescents to be able to enrol into formal education, there must be a school in the village or near to it, where an adolescent girl could (re)enrol.</p> <p>In terms of the accessibility of the schools for adolescent girls, on average it takes one hour to reach it by foot, which is quite a long distance, and therefore a likely barrier that may cause a break in the causal chain.</p>	<p>iii. Coverage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were there enough in-school and out-of-school adolescents in a village to create a MAG? • Were all groups of community members allowed and interested to take part in the trainings and community meetings, including women? • Were trainings provided to influential community leaders on child rights, gender and girl's education? • Were community discussions periodically organized? • Did adolescents take part meaningfully in the MAGs and spread the lessons learned within the community? • Did the CLs and RLs access and use the information to support adolescent protection? <p>iv. Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the programmes created effectively tapping into the requests, wishes and needs of the youth involved in the MAGs and the sub-committees? • Were the life-skills trainings for MAG-members considered effective by the youth to equip them with enough tools to face the challenges that they have identified at the beginning of the programme? • Were trainings provided to community leaders effective? Did leaders and community members notice any meaningful change in how youth issues are dealt at the community level? • Was the <i>in-Mosque methodology</i> adopted for the trainings on child rights an effective tool to ensure that the training was well received and supported by the beneficiaries? • Did the adolescents communicate their rights and problems? • Did communities mobilise to raise awareness on violence against children and build consensus on social norms as a result of the IALA activities and as expected within the ToC? • To what extent are adolescents able to communicate with each other and policymakers? Why and how? • Do interviews with programme beneficiaries reveal an overall perception that the IALA reached its goals (i.e. reduction in child marriage, increase in secondary education enrolment for boys and girls, decrease in adolescent pregnancy) or not? • Do adolescents identify early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and school dropout as challenges that are relevant to them and communicate those to the authorities? 		<p>There are enough in-school and out-of-school adolescents in a village to create a MAG</p> <p>The qualifications and availability of trainers is satisfactory to supervise MAGs</p>	<p>Reports of respondents on selection process for MAG participants and related challenges</p> <p>Participation in ToT</p>
--	---	---	--	---	--

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the services for adolescents exist and are they accessible? (i.e. schools for girls to re-enrol into are close by for them to walk to without harm. <p>v. Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were funds for creating life skills modules, sports kits etc. financially sustainable to be supported over the length of the whole programme? Have activities proved sustainable throughout the whole duration of the programme so as to ensure that elders, parents and influential individuals from the community support adolescents to access services, participate in decision making and prevent exposure to harmful traditional practices? Were the village premises suitable to host all the MAG activities over the long term? Was the provision of resources (e.g. books and chalk) available for the whole duration of the IALA activities? Are MAGs meeting on a regular basis? Are some traditional practices (e.g., Ailaq), which require a long absence from a village, leading to the deterioration of the learning outcomes? Is the cascade learning approach perceived feasible by stakeholders and beneficiaries? 			
<p>2. Programme implementation</p>	<p>The midline evaluation had found that peer to peer mentoring (knowledge cascade approach) could be improved by spreading more awareness about MAGs among adolescents</p> <p>Use of digital media as mean to cascade the adolescents' knowledge should be avoided since access to internet is not universal for adolescents. Poor performance of radio debates, little participation of parents and adolescents, small audience listening to the New Home New Life (NHNL) programme</p> <p>Objectives of child marriage and enrolment are moving in the expected direction. However, at midline a</p>	<p>i. Relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well was the organisation of MAGs adapted to the local context and adolescent needs/priorities? What were the key considerations in organising the MAGs in a given context, particularly boys/girls interaction? Who determined this organisation? Were any of the MAG members consulted to understand their interest? <p>ii. Fidelity/Coherence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did programme implementation match operational expectations in each state / district? Was there any delay or change in the implementation plan? If yes, for what reason(s)? Were MAGs implemented according to the prescribed design across all participating sites? Was the implementation uniform or were there divergencies? Which factors (environmental, social, political, economic, etc.) contributed to uniformity/divergence in implementation of the programme across participating sites? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing agencies (AKF + WVA) UNICEF regional staff Adolescents (boys and girls, pregnant and non pregnant MAG members) Parents Community leaders 	<p>Community members have access to radio/mobile phones (to listen to radio programmes etc)</p> <p>Literacy rates are high enough to access the information provided during the CL/RL trainings and the life skills, self-expression, etc trainings</p>	<p>Reported participation in, as well as use and knowledge of radio programmes</p> <p>Respondents' reported implications of literacy levels</p>

	<p>recommendation was made to accelerate the school enrolment programme to achieve the endline target of a 15-point increase.</p> <p>Parents' participation in the IALA needs to increase since their influence on the adolescents' decision-making is still very high.</p> <p>At the time of the midline, not enough community-level activities had been carried out suggesting the need to evaluate those at the endline stage. Moreover, the common barriers to implementation, faced by provincial and national implementation teams due to COVID and local practices, should also be tackled by the endline.</p> <p>Badghis is lagging behind in implementation compared to Bamyan (e.g., numbers of CDs implemented, CLs reporting having improved adolescents' access to information)</p> <p>It is relevant to examine if any of the implemented pillars is best to affect the largest change in desired outcomes</p> <p>Programme / Interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAGs • Radio debates • Community Discussions, radio debates, development of action plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were programme monitoring systems adequate in tracking the implementation of the MAG activities and providing reliable, accurate and consistent data from all implementation sites? • Which gaps/deficiencies exist in the monitoring system in terms of tracking progress towards attainment of key performance indicators related to MAG interventions along the results chain. <p>iii. Coverage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were MAG interventions able to reach and engage the desired participants? What factors affected the differential participation in MAGs, if observed? • To what extent did MAG members engage with community leaders/platforms? How did community leaders/platforms support the MAGs? • How did parents (fathers and mothers) participate, support and experience MAGs? Did this support differ across community or family context? Why or why not? <p>iv. Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the programme implementation success and failures? • In what ways and with what effect were partnerships with NGOs and/or government service providers sought and established to help programme implementation in each province? • How effective was the coordination and cooperation within UNICEF and with implementing partners, e.g. NGOs and government service providers? • Under which circumstances did the linkage with CP services work well/not well; what were the enablers/ impediments? • How have expectations, experiences and decisions of adolescents, parents and community leaders with regards to child marriage changed; and to what effect? • How effective were teachers in supporting adolescent participation/learning in the ALCs? What challenges were faced? <p>v. Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the enablers (external environment or programme related) of continued participation in those activities that have been sustained over time and the impediments to continuing with those that have been abandoned 		<p>Trainings for influential community members were comprehensive enough to positively influence their views on adolescents' rights and on harmful practices</p> <p>Services for adolescents exist and are accessible, i.e., schools for girls to (re-)enrol into are close by for them to walk to without harm</p>	<p>Feedback of CL/RLs on trainings</p> <p>Reported challenges to education and types of accessible and lacking services</p>
<p>3. Adolescent empowerment</p>	<p>Female adolescents are lagging behind in some indicators (participation in decisions affecting their lives, access to phones/internet, awareness of harmful practices) and are</p>	<p>i. Relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the adolescent priorities/preferences in the organisation of MAGs, in particular the gendered organisation? • How did the interaction between girls and boys in the MAG activities influence participation? 	<p>- Implementing agencies (AKF + WVA)</p>	<p>MAGs are meeting on a regular basis and some tradition practices (e.g., Allaq), which require a long absence from a village, do not lead to low</p>	<p>Reported attendance, also according to gender and reported challenges to participation</p>

	<p>more advanced in others (expression of disapproval regarding HTPs and protection of their friends) compared to their male counterparts</p> <p>High teenage pregnancy percentage (45%) among married female adolescents in the intervention villages</p> <p>Adolescents' participation in decisions affecting their lives is low, as well as their influence over the development of the child protection action plans</p> <p>Programme / Interventions:</p> <p>All</p>	<p>ii. Fidelity/Coherence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were the programme's objectives and design aligned with the context and needs of programme beneficiaries, including adolescents and the most vulnerable groups? <p>iii. Coverage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what degree did programme interventions foster inclusiveness of boys/girls, out-of-school children, vulnerable groups in MAG member selection process, MAG leadership and participation in MAG activities? Which factors affected inclusion/exclusion? <p>iv. Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well did programme activities contribute to adolescents' participation in ALC, particularly out-of-school children ? In what ways have adolescents become more empowered; and how has IALA, particularly MAG participation, contributed to this? How did adolescent empowerment differ between boys and girls following programme participation? what explains the differences (gender-equity dimensions)? How and why did the effectiveness of MAGs vary across contexts and over time <p>v. Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why/How do you explain the gender discrepancies in the change of attitudes of the adolescent programme beneficiaries, when there was evidence of equal participation? How can future adolescent programming activities enhance the empowerment of female adolescents (participation vs empowerment)? What are the barriers to female empowerment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF regional staff Adolescents (girls and boys) Parents 	<p>attendance rates and the deterioration of learning outcomes</p> <p>The cascade learning approach is feasible, e.g., not all adolescents are approaching the same set of individuals to pass on their knowledge</p> <p>Adolescents identify early marriage, teenage pregnancy and school dropouts as challenges that are relevant to them and communicate those to authorities or to CL/RLs</p> <p>Governmental/non-governmental organisations and institutions are acting upon the communicated problems</p>	<p>Reported ways and recipients of implementing cascade learning approach</p> <p>Reported type of communication and included topics between adolescents and CL/RLs and adolescent</p> <p>Reported type of actions taken</p>
--	---	---	--	---	---

ANNEX 3. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Sr. No.	Tehsil	Village	Gender	Respondent Type
1	QalaeNau	DarwishMuhammadi	F	MAG Member
2	QalaeNau	DarwishMuhammadi	M	MAG Member
3	QalaeNau	DarwishMuhammadi	F	MAG Parents
4	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	M	MAG Member
5	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	F	MAG Member
6	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	F	MAG Member
7	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	M	MAG Parent
8	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	F	MAG Parent
9	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	F	MAG Parent
10	QalaeNau	Baghlar	F	MAG Member
11	QalaeNau	Baghlar	F	MAG Parent
12	QalaeNau	Baghlar	F	MAG Member
13	QalaeNau	Baghlar	F	MAG Parent
14	QalaeNau	Baghlar	M	MAG Member
15	QalaeNau	Baghlar	M	MAG Parent
16	QalaeNau	Baghlar	M	MAG Member
17	QalaeNau	Baghlar	M	MAG Parent
18	Muqur	Kandi HA	F	MAG Member
19	Muqur	Kandi HA	F	MAG Parent
20	Muqur	Kandi Ha	F	MAG Member
21	Muqur	Kandi HA	F	MAG Member
22	Muqur	Kandi HA	M	MAG Parent
23	Muqur	Kandi HA	M	MAG Member
24	Qadis	Khoda Madaha	F	MAG Member
25	Qadis	Khoda Madaha	F	MAG Parent
26	Qadis	Khoda Madaha	M	MAG Member
27	Qadis	Khoda Madaha	M	MAG Parent
28	QalaeNau	Baghlar	F	MAG Mentor
29	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	F	MAG Mentor
30	QalaeNau	MullaShams	F	MAG Mentor
31	Muqur	Kandi Ha	M	MAG Mentor
32	QalaeNau	Dahan Baghak	M	CL
33	QalaeNau	Baghlar	M	RL
34	Qadis	Khoda Madaha	M	CL
35	Muqur	Kandi HA	M	RL
36	QalaeNau	DarwishMuhammadi	M	RL
37	Muqur	Kandi HA	M	RL
38	Qadis	Khoda Madaha	M	MAG Mentor
39	QalaeNau	DarwishMuhammadi	M	MAG Mentor
40	Saighan	Khaja Ganj	F	ALC Teacher
41	Saighan	KhajaGanj	F	MAG Member
42	Saighan	Khaja Ganj	F	MAG Parent
43	Saighan	Khaja Ganj	F	MAG Member
44	Saighan	KhajaGanj	F	MAG Parent

45	Saighan	Khaja Ganj	M	MAG Parents
46	Saighan	Khaja Ganj	M	MAG Member
47	Saighan	Khaja Ganj	M	RL
48	Shibar	Jula	F	MAG Member
49	Shibar	Jula	F	MAG Parents
50	Shibar	Jula	F	MAG member
51	Shibar	Jula	F	MAG Parents
52	Shibar	Jula	M	MAG MEMBER
53	Shibar	Jula	M	MAG Parents
54	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	M	MAG Member
55	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	M	MAG Member
56	Yakawlang	Chahar De	F	MAG Mentor
57	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	F	MAG Member
58	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	M	MAG Parents
59	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	M	MAG Parents
60	Yakawlang	Nayak	M	MAG Supervisor
61	Bamyan Center	Surkh Qul	M	RL
62	Yakawlang	De Surkh	F	MAG Mentor
63	Bamyan Center	Sayalayak	F	MAG Member
64	Bamyan Center	Sayalayak	F	MAG Member
65	Bamyan Center	Sayalayak	M	MAG Parents
66	Bamyan Center	Sayalayak	M	MAG Parents
67	Bamyan Center	Sayalayak	M	MAG member
68	Yakawlang	SariKanak	M	MAG Mentor
69	Bamyan Center	SariAhangar	F	ALC Teacher
70	Bamyan Center	SariAhangar	F	ALC Teacher
71	Yakawlang	Keligan	F	MAG Parents
72	Yakawlang	Keligan	F	MAG Member
73	Yakawlang	Keligan	F	MAG Member
74	Yakawlang	Keligan	F	MAG Parents
75	Yakawlang	Keligan	M	MAG Member
76	Yakawlang	Keligan	M	MAG Parents
77	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	F	CL
78	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	F	CL
79	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	F	CL
80	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	F	CL
81	Bamyan Center	Haiderabad	F	MAG Mentor
82	Bamyan Center	Bamyan	M	MAG Supervisor
83	Bamyan Center	Bamyan	M	KII-AKF
84	Bamyan Center	Bamyan	M	KII-AKF
85	Bamyan Center	Bamyan	M	KII-UNICEF
86	Badghis	Badghis	M	KII-WV
87	Badghis	Badghis	M	KII-WV
88	Badghis	Badghis	M	KII-UNICEF
89	Badghis	Badghis	M	KII-WV
90	Badghis	Badghis	M	KII- GOVT

ANNEX 4. LIST OF SITE VISITS

Bamyan	Badghis
Haider Abad	Darwish Mohammadi
Jula	Dahan Baghak
Khaja Ganj	Baghlar zad Morad
Sayalayak	Kandi Ha
Keligan	Khoda Madaha

ANNEX 5. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

1. IDI Interview Guide – MAG Mentors / Life Skills Trainers

INFORMATION

Date of interview: ___/___/___ Name of interviewer:

Type of interviewee: MAG Mentor

District: Village: MAG:

Gender: Age:

INFORMED CONSENT

Hello. My name is ... and I work as a consultant for Almansoora Solutions, a research institution based in Afghanistan. We are doing a study about the **Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) programme** implemented by UNICEF, and we would like to hear the **opinions and experiences** of [young people / MAG mentors / parents / religious leaders/ community leaders / teachers/ programme implementers] who took part in it. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to us. We will discuss the following topics: the **Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs)**, the **trainings** provided to adolescents at the MAGs, IALA's **community radio** and the **community participation** in the MAGs and overall IALA activities.

There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear your views and learn about your experiences. Please do not hesitate to express your opinion, and feel free to share with us any additional information not covered by our questions. Your participation is very much appreciated. This interview will take approximately one hour.

Participation in the interview is **completely voluntary**. You will not be provided with any payment to take part in the research. Please also note that your responses will be utilized only for the purpose of this study, they will remain **anonymous**, and your name will not be displayed. You can refuse to answer any question that you do not want to answer, take a break or stop the discussion at any time. If you have any concerns, I am happy to talk to you about them or I can put you in contact with my supervisor.

[For young people] You could be referred to supporting services if you require so as well.

With your permission I would like to **audio record** the conversation; in this way I can free myself from taking notes and can listen to you attentively. The audio recording will be solely for the use of this study and will not be used to identify you. [Audio recording will be abandoned if participants object]. Do you have any questions before we start?

[If the respondent allows to interview, make sure to record consent on recorder]

I'm going to press record now and just ask you to confirm again your consent to participate and your agreement with recording the interview.

[Turn recording device on]

- Do you agree to take part in the interview? [YES]
- Do you agree to let me record it? [YES]

Consent provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (=1)
	<input type="checkbox"/> No (=0)

Thank you for giving your consent. We can now proceed with the discussion.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- Do you live locally?
- What work do you currently do?
- Since when have you worked for World Vision/AKF [depending on province]?

INTERVIEW GUIDE

MAG set-up, group, and activities

1. How long have you been/were you a MAG mentor?
2. How did you become a MAG mentor? Tell me how you became involved in the programme, how you were recruited and how you started.
3. What was your MAG group like? Please give me an account of members and their roles:
 1. How many members were there? How many boys and girls? How many were in school/out of school?
 2. Who could join your MAG? Were there any criteria to join the MAGs?
 3. What roles were held in the group and what activities did these different roles do? (probes: leader, deputy, secretary, supervisor, mentor, heads of sub-committees, etc.). Who chaired the meetings?
 4. How were members selected and assigned to the roles, what process did they go through?
4. Where did your MAG meet? Who provided the venue and how often did you usually meet?

5. **What activities did you do in your MAG?**

Please indicate briefly the type of activities you covered and a timeline/duration for each [i.e., Life Skills Training, Self-Expression Training, events, others]

6. **How were activities decided and how were they organized in the MAG group?** [hold for answer, then use probes if not mentioned before]:

1. **Who** decided what activities to have and how were these decided?
2. Were **MAG members involved** in any way in the decision of what topics and/or activities to include? How? Did MAG members **voice their opinion** about priorities and possible areas of interest??
3. How did your group **organize the activities** to be done in the MAG? Did you have “**action plans**”? [IF YES] **How were these developed?**

[If NO] What was the process of organizing activities? How did you do?

4. Did **girls and boys decide** on the activities together or separately? How did you discuss what was important for each? To what extent do you think were both boys' and girls' voices **heard**?
5. How did you **keep track** of the activities organized at the MAG and of who was participating? What **challenges** did you face in this regard?
6. What were the MAG members' main **needs** when organizing the activities, how these needs were identified and how did you address them/how did you **support** them?

7. **How do you feel was the adolescents' participation in the MAG?** [hold for answer, then use probes if not mentioned before]:

1. Did they **participate actively** (i.e., taking part in discussions, expressing opinions, volunteering to organize activities, etc.), or did they mostly have to be **prompted** to participate? How was **participation** in your view, and what influenced this?
2. Who needed the **most support** and why? What did you do to support them?
3. What **differences** did you find in the **participation of boys and of girls**? Why was this? [probe: Was participation of boys different than the girls?]
4. How did you **oversee** and **moderate** the **discussions** that took place at the MAG group?
5. How did the group **resolve conflicts** or differences in opinion? What was your role in that?

8. Who **assisted** you to organize the MAG activities? How often and in what ways did they support you?

1. What type of **support** would have been helpful for you in this aspect of your role?

9. **How was attendance like in your MAG group?** [hold for answer, then use probes if not mentioned before]:

1. How many members came **regularly** and how many **less frequently**? **Why** do you think this was the case? Did you find any commonalities in groups of adolescents that took part more or less regularly in the trainings?
2. Did attendance **change** at any point throughout the years? Did anyone **stop** coming at all, and if so, do you know what happened?
3. In your view, what **factors** affected MAG attendance?
4. Was the MAG venue easily **reachable** for adolescents in your group?
5. Do you think the MAG schedule was **adapted to adolescents' chores and activities**? How/why or why not?
6. Were there **village or regional activities** that had an **impact on MAG schedule and adolescents' attendance**? [probe: traditional practices such as Aliaq]. Were any sessions **cancelled/postponed** or re-scheduled due to these? Why/why not?
7. Was there any difference in the **attendance of girls and boys**? What factors influenced this?

Life Skills Training

Let's now talk about the Life Skills Training that you delivered to MAG members.

Training of Trainers

10. **How were you prepared for delivering the Life Skills Training? Tell me about your own training at the “Trainer of Trainers” (TOT).**

[probes: who organized it and where, amount and frequency of sessions, core topics covered, trainer support offered]

11. **How satisfied were you with the training you received?** [pause for answer, then probe]

1. What did you find **most useful** about the training?
2. What was the easiest and what the most difficult parts of the training?

3. How do you assess the overall **quality of the training materials** you were provided with? Was there anything else that you would have needed or that would have been useful to have?
4. What do you feel could be **improved** about the training?
5. **Do you feel it was enough to be able to teach the adolescents in the MAG? Why/why not? How useful was it for your work with adolescents?**

12. **Have you received any refresher training after becoming a trainer?**

1. [If YES] **When** did this take place and for **how long**?
What did the refresher training **cover**?
What were your **takeaways** from the refresher training? What else would have been **useful** to get from this training?
2. 12.2 [If NO] **Why** was this the case? Would you have needed a refresher training? What would have been **useful** for you in this regard?

13. **Have you received support from the MAG Supervisor or from project staff for delivering the LS training? [If YES], in what way?**

MAG Life Skills Training

14. **Which topics/modules of the LS training have you covered in your MAG group and within which schedule?**

[Ask to mention topics covered AND approx. time/number of sessions and frequency of training. A list is provided here for guidance, (to help interviewee if needed) but do not read out aloud item by item]:

- Personal life skills
- Decision making/critical thinking skills
- Interpersonal life skills
- Health and nutrition
- Gender, child rights and child protection, girls' education
- Adolescents as change agents

15. **How were topics selected for the LS training and how adaptable was the training curricula for MAG mentors?**

[probes: fixed or flexible order of curricula; established methods or option to choose methods; pre-defined or flexible topics]

16. **In your view, to what extent was the LS training relevant to the needs of the adolescents in this area? How and why? [please hold for answer, then proceed with probes if not mentioned before]:**

1. Were there any **prior studies** that you know of, for including the topics in the trainings?
2. Were adolescents **involved** at any point in the decision regarding contents? In what ways?
3. In your view, was the training suitable to participants' **level of literacy**? Did the level of literacy affect training practices in any way? [If YES], how and what was done to address this problem?
4. What do you think should be taken into consideration to make MAG trainings **more relevant or useful** for adolescents in this area?

17. **Were there any [other] challenges to implement the LS training activities as they were planned? What were these and what was done to address them?**

18. **How do you think adolescents felt about discussing the topics of the LS training at the MAG? [please hold for answer, then proceed with probes if not mentioned before]:**

1. What was the **level of comfort** of adolescents when discussing these in the group?
How/where did you appreciate this?
2. Do you know if your group had addressed these topics **previously** in other contexts [*i.e., at school, at home or at another setting*]? Where and in what way, as far as you know?
3. Which topics did your group **like the most** and why?
4. Were there topics they did **not like** or that they did **not find relevant**? Which and why?
5. Were there any topics which were particularly **difficult** for them to discuss? Which and why?
6. What do you think could have made them **more comfortable** to participate in MAG discussions?

19. **Did your MAG group have any other trainings, such as Self-expression Trainings/Community Radio?**

1. Which were these and what did they **cover**?
2. What was your **experience** with these trainings? What **went well**?
3. What could have been **different** and why?

Learning Outcomes & Impacts

20. **What topics/knowledge do you feel the adolescents in your group have managed to internalize best after the trainings? Why has this been the case?**

21. **What topics do you think adolescents have not internalized well through the MAG's trainings? Why?** [*probes: level of difficulty of the topics, lack of interest, external influences such as family and friends, etc.*]

[*Note for Interviewer: For the next questions on learning outcomes and changes to adolescents and communities' views and behaviours, please probe the situation in terms of before/after the programme and at present*]

22. **How do you think adolescents felt about early marriage and pregnancy after taking part in the MAG? Did they change their views in any way, and if so, how?**

1. What is the **situation now**? How do adolescents feel regarding these topics in the current scenario?

23. **Have you seen any changes in the behaviour of the adolescents you taught with regard to early marriage and pregnancy after taking part in the MAG?**

1. [If YES], In what **ways** and in which **circumstances**? [*e.g., at home/with their family, in social contexts with their peers, etc.*]

2. [If NOT], **Why** do you think that there are no changes?

3. What is the **situation like now**? What is adolescents' behaviour with regard to early marriage and pregnancy in the current scenario?

24. **have you noticed any changes in adolescents' behaviour towards school after taking part in the MAG?** [*wait for answer, then probe if not mentioned*]

1. In your view, has the MAG influenced adolescents' **view of school** in any way? How?

2. Is **school attendance** viewed by adolescents in your group as **important** to their lives? Why/why not?

3. Have you acknowledged yourself or received any feedback about **changes to MAG members' school attendance after taking part in the MAG**, in comparison to when they started at the MAG?

4. Were there any changes in adolescents' attendance to **Alternative Learning Centres (ALCs)**?

5. How is the **situation now**? What are the main **challenges** for school attendance in this area?

6. How do adolescents feel about school attendance **at present**? How is it like for boys and for girls?

25. **Which skills do you think the adolescents in your MAG have developed as a result of the trainings? What do they know how to do now that they didn't before?**

1. How can you tell/where do you see these **skills applied**?

2. How are these skills **relevant** in the current scenario?

3. Are there skills that you wish they would have **developed more or better**? Which and why?

26. **In your view, do learning outcomes of adolescents differ by age group? Are there differences in the knowledge and skills acquired between younger and older adolescents?**

1. And are there any **differences by gender**? In what way?

27. **Do you know if adolescents have shared the knowledge and skills they acquired with other peers outside the MAG? Have they mentored other adolescents, as far as you are aware?**

1. [If YES] **What** have they shared, **with whom** and in **what contexts**?

How did you **monitor** the **mentoring** activities that happened?

What has **worked well** about peer mentoring, and what **hasn't worked well**? **Why**?

2. [If NO] **Why** do you think this was the case? What were the **prime reasons** for not mentoring peers? [*e.g. fear, cultural barriers, lack of ability to talk about issues, etc.*]

28. **Have adolescents changed the way they discuss their problems, or who they discuss them with, after taking part in the MAG? How and why?**

1. Did MAG members reach out to their **families**? What about and what was their **reaction**? What was the **outcome**, as far as you know?

[*probe on positive feedback from family, negative feedback from family, possible outcomes on participation in MAGs*]

2. Did MAG members reach out to other **members of the community**, including community or religious leaders? What about and what was their **reaction**? What was the **outcome**, as far as you know?

[*probe on positive feedback from community/religious leaders, negative feedback from community/religious leaders, possible outcomes on participation in MAGs*]

Community Engagement

29. **How did the community react to the work done by the MAG?**

1. Were MAG activities **approved or not** of by parents and community leaders? Were adolescents **encouraged** or **discouraged** to take part? Why do you think this was the case?

30. **How was the community involved in the work done at the MAG?**
1. How **engaged** were **parents** with your MAG's work? How many parents, how often and in what ways? What support did they provide, if any?
 2. Were other **community members engaged** with your MAG's work? Who and in what ways? [e.g. *community leaders, elders, local authorities, etc.*]
 3. What **challenges** did you face when managing the interaction between the MAG and the community?
31. **Following the implementation of IALA, were there any changes in the views and/or in the practices of the community towards:** [please probe the situation in terms of before/after the programme and at present. Ask each question about each topic separately and hold for answer]
1. **Early marriage and early pregnancy?**
 2. **And access to education for adolescents/school attendance?**
 3. **Other issues** affecting adolescents?
 4. Have there been any changes in the **services** available to adolescents in the area, or in adolescents' outreach to these services? In what ways?
 5. How is the **situation now**? Were [any] **changes maintained** or not? What do you think has changed and what has remained the same after the programme ended?

Overall Impacts & Sustainability

32. **After the MAGs finished, has the community maintained the changes observed or not? What do you think has changed and what has remained the same after the programme ended?**
- a. **How likely** do you think it is that these changes will remain in the community?
33. **Were any of the activities promoted by IALA still being done by the adolescents or the community after the project finished?** [i.e. *MAG meetings, community discussions, action plans*]. **Which and how often did they take place?**
1. **Why** do you think these activities were taken up/continued?
 2. Are these activities still in place **now**? How **likely** it is that they will continue in the future?
34. **How do you imagine the MAG members' lives would have been, should they not have had the MAG? What would be the same and what would be different, in your view?**
35. **Overall, what do you think are the successes of the MAG groups and of the IALA programme?**
- What has this intervention managed to achieve?**
36. **What has the intervention not managed to achieve, in your view, and to what do you attribute this result?**
37. **Is there anything you would change about the IALA programme, if it were to be implemented again? How could it be improved?**

Thank you very much for your time and your support.

Please feel free to contact us in case you would like to know more about the study or if you have additional information to share.

2. IDI Interview Guide – MAG Members

INFORMATION

Date of interview: ___/___/___

Name of interviewer(s):

District:

Village:

MAG:

Gender:

Age:

INFORMED CONSENT & SAFEGUARDING

Hello. My name is ... and I work as a consultant for the **Center for Evaluation and Development (C4ED)**, a non-profit research institution based in Germany and in Pakistan. We are doing a study about the **Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) programme financed by UNICEF in Afghanistan**, and we would like to hear the opinions of adolescents who took part in it. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to us. We would like to discuss your **experiences with the Multi-Purpose Adolescent Group – MAG**, your **activities** in the group, the **trainings** you had, the **community radio** and the **community activities** organized through the MAGs.

There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear your views and learn about your experiences. Please do not hesitate to express your opinion, and feel free to share with us any additional information not covered by our questions. Your participation is very much appreciated. This interview will take approximately forty-five minutes to one hour.

- Do you feel OK to continue?
- Are we in a place where you feel you can speak privately?

[If interviewee says YES, proceed] [If NOT, interviewer should suggest change of location]

In case you feel that you would like to talk to someone after our interview, if you feel you need help or support, I will provide you with the contact of a social worker that you can talk to.

Participation in the interview is completely voluntary. Please also note that your responses will be utilized only for the purpose of this study, they will remain anonymous, and your name will not be displayed. If you feel uncomfortable about any of the questions I ask, you may skip the question or stop the discussion at any time. If you have any concerns, I am happy to talk to you about them or I can put you in contact with my supervisor.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the conversation. In this way I can free myself from taking notes and can listen to you attentively. The audio recording will be solely for the use of this study and will never be used to identify you *[Audio recording will be abandoned if participants object]*.

[If the respondent allows to interview, make sure to record consent on recorder]

Do you have any questions before we start?

I'm going to press record now and just ask you to confirm again your participation and agreement that I record the interview.

[Turn recording device on]

- Do you agree to take part in the interview? [YES]
- Do you agree to let me record it? [YES]

Parental consent given	<input type="checkbox"/> I Yes (=1) <input type="checkbox"/> I No (=0)
Interviewee's assent provided	<input type="checkbox"/> I Yes (=1) <input type="checkbox"/> I No (=0)

Thank you. We can now proceed with the discussion.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

[Interviewer: Please share a few facts about yourself to "break the ice"]

- **Do you take part in any groups or clubs in your village?**
- **What activities do you like to do when you have time to yourself?**

INTERVIEW GUIDE

MAG set-up, group & activities

1. **How did you learn about the MAGs and how did you become a member? Tell me about the process of how you got involved in the MAG.**

[Note for interviewer: we want to understand how they found out about it, what prompted them to take part, what was the process to become a member (was there a selection?), how did they join (through friends, family, teacher, social worker/NGO, others)]

2. **How was your MAG like?** *[hold for answer, then probe]*:
 - a. How **many** members were there in your group? How many **boys and girls**? How many were **in school and out of school**?

- b. **Who** could join the MAG? Was there a criterion for joining? Do you know anyone who could not join MAG? What were the reasons?
 - c. How **frequently** did you **meet**?
 - d. Can you tell me what **roles** were there in the MAG and what **activities** did people do in these roles have? [*i.e., leader, deputy, secretary, head of sub-committee, members of sub-committees, etc.*] How were members **assigned** the roles? How did it **work**?
 - e. What **sub-committees** were there and for what topics? Were you part of any sub-committee? [If YES], which one and what activities did you engage in?
3. **How did your group decide on what activities to organize as part of the MAG?** [*hold for answer, then probe*]:
- a. **How** were decisions made in the MAG group about which activities or topics to work on?
 - b. Did **girls and boys decide** on the activities together or separately? Do you think both boys and girls' voices were heard? Do you recall a suggestion given by a girl in your group? And by a boy?
 - c. **How** did you organize the activities in the MAG? Were their '**action plans**'? [If YES] How were these developed? [If NO] then how activities were organized? Can you recall?
 - d. Was there a **mentor, supervisor or other adult available** to help MAG members organize activities? Who else? How often and in what ways did they support the group?
4. **How often did you usually attend the MAG?** [*hold for answer, then probe*]:
- a. Was the MAG venue **close or far from your home**? How did you reach it?, Was it easy or hard to reach?
 - b. Was there anything that made it difficult for you to attend, *i.e. school work, chores, family, other commitments*?
 - f. What about for other members? How many people came **regularly** and how many came **less frequently**? Why do you think that was?
 - c. Did anyone **stop coming** at all? Do you know why or what happened? Did the group try to do something about it? Please share any personal experience if you can recall.
5. **How did you feel about your participation at the MAG?** [*hold for answer, then probe*]:
- a. Was it **easy** or **hard** to take part, and why? Did you feel **comfortable** enough to talk, or did you prefer to listen to other people? **Why** do you think was it like this?
6. **How was participation for boys and for girls at the MAG? Was it different in any way? How?** [*probes: attendance, discussion of topics, amount/frequency of participation, interest, etc.*]
7. **What did you like the most about the MAGs? Why?**
8. **Is there anything that you did not like about the MAGs, or that you wished would have been different? What and why?**
9. **How important do you feel the MAG has been in your life, if you compare it to other groups that you are part of?**

Life Skills Training

10. **I understand that you took part in the MAG's Life Skills Training. Can you tell me how was the experience like?** [*pause for answer, then continue to probe*]:
- a. **When** and **where** did the training take place, and **how long** was it? **Who** gave it?
 - b. **What topics did you discuss in the training?** [*note: we want to hear the topics in the adolescents' own words; have the list of modules in mind as a reference*] **What do you recall?**
 - c. **What type of activities did you do?** [*e.g., writing, drawing, role playing, etc.*]
11. **How did your group feel about the topics that were taught at the Life Skills Training?** [*pause for answer, then continue to probe*]:
- a. What topics did your group **like the most and why?** And you, what topic/s did you **like** the most and why?
 - b. Was there anything that your group **did not like?** Which and why? And **for you?**
 - c. Were there topics that were **difficult** to discuss? Which and why?
 - d. Are there topics that should be discussed **only with girls or only with boys?** Which ones and why?
 - e. Could the **MAG suggest topics** to talk about? How was your group's experience in this?

- f. [If not mentioned until now] Are there **other topics or concerns** that you would have liked to see included in MAG activities, or that you wished you would have had more time to discuss? Which and why?

12. **Had you ever talked about the topics of the LS training before joining the MAGs, i.e. at school, at home or in another setting/with someone else? How did you feel about discussing these back then/there, and how did you feel about talking about these in the MAG? Was it different in any way? How so and why?**

13. **What did you learn in this training that you didn't know before?** [note: probe for both knowledge and skills gained, learned about/learned how to do]

- a. If you could pick **one key learning** that you take away from the LS trainings (i.e. new piece of knowledge, or new skill you developed), what would it be?

Other Trainings

14. **Did you take part in other trainings?** [i.e. self-expression, sports for development, etc.] **Which ones and what about?**

- a. How was the **experience** for you? Tell me what the training comprised [probes: what type of activities did you do (e.g., write, draw, etc.), who gave the training and where, how long/frequent was it, what topics did it cover]
- b. What did you do with the **result of your work** in the training? (i.e. story, drawing, etc.) Did you show it outside of the MAG group? Where and to whom?
- c. What did you **like** about this training/experience?
- d. What do you **take away** from it? What did you learn, that you didn't know before?
- e. Was there anything that you **did not like**? What and why?

15. **Have you ever taken part in any community radio activities organized by the programme?**

1. [If YES] **Which one?** [probes: radio debate, story writing, etc.]

- a. **How** did you get to participate? Tell me how you got involved.
- b. Did you receive any **training** to take part? What did it cover and how was it?
- c. What did you **talk about** in this debate/programme? Why was this topic chosen?
- d. What did you do and how was your **experience**? How did you **feel** about your participation?
- e. Did someone you know **listen** to the debate/programme? What did they say about it?

a. [If NOT] **Have you ever listened to the "New Hopes, New Lives" programme? Tell me about it** [hold for answer, then reply]

- a. What was the programme **about**?
- b. How **often** do/did you listen to it? **Who** did you listen to it with?
- c. What did you **like** about this programme and why? What made it **interesting or engaging**?
- d. Did you **learn** something from this programme? Please elaborate.
- e. Can you **recall one episode** that felt particularly significant to you? Tell me about it.
- f. Is there anything you **did not like** about the programme? What and why was that?
- g. Were the topics in this programme **relevant for young people**? Why yes/not?
- h. Did people in your **school or community** listen to it to? What did they think about it?

Learning Outcomes

Sub-topic: Early Marriage [& Pregnancy]

16. **Have you discussed about early marriage in your MAG?**

- a. What do you **recall** about these discussions?
- b. What did you **learn** about early marriage at the MAG? And about dowry? And about bride price?
- c. What did you **think** about early marriage before the MAG?
- a. What do you think about early marriage **now**? [hold for answer] Has your view **changed** in any way after what you learned at the MAG? How?
- b. At what **age** do you think is it appropriate for a girl to be married? Why? And for a boy Why?
- d. At the MAG, did you also talk about **pregnancy**? [If YES], what do you **recall** about your discussions? [if pregnancy questions are too sensitive, please move forward to education]
- e. What did you **learn**?
- f. And how do you **think** about it now, in comparison to before the MAG?

17. **How was the experience of talking about marriage [and pregnancy] at the MAG for you?**
- Was it **easy/comfortable** or **difficult/uncomfortable** for you to talk about it?
 - How was it for the **other MAG members**?
18. **If a girl you know (friend, family) was promised in marriage and she did not want to get married, what would be your reaction?**
- Would anyone in your **community intervene** in this matter? Who and what would they do?
19. **Have you faced any attempt to be married? [If YES] Please tell me about it**
- How could you influence this decision?
 - Did someone support you to reject/delay the proposal? Who?
 - Would your guardians and family members allow you to choose your life partner?
20. **Are there any practices in your community for boys or for girls that you disagree with? [If YES] What are these and why do you disagree with them**
21. **Are there things that are OK for boys to do, but not for girls? What are these? Who says these are OK or not?**
- In your community, can a married girl **study or work**? Do you know married girls who do so? Is it difficult for them? Why/why not?
22. **What are the differences in the way people treat girls and boys in your community? Do you think they are valued differently? In what ways?**

Sub-topic: Education

23. **Have you discussed adolescents' access to education in your MAG? [probe with next questions]:**
- What do you **recall** about these discussions?
 - What did you **learn** about access to education for adolescents at the MAG?
 - What **challenges** do adolescents in your community face to go to school? Is it different for boys and for girls? How and why?
 - How important** do you think school is for adolescents' lives? Do the adolescents you know feel **motivated** to go to school or not? Why yes/not?
 - How was the MAG **different from school**?
 - Has the MAG **changed anything with regard to how you feel** about school? If so, how and why?
24. **What kind of support would help adolescents to stay in school, or to help those who are out of school to return? Who can provide this support and how?**
25. **Have you taught or mentored other adolescents about what you have learned in the MAG? Tell me about your experience**
- [If YES]: *[if not mentioned, probe]:*
- How many adolescents did you **reach out to**? **Who** were they and **how** did you get to mentor them? For **how long** did you do this?
 - What **topics** did you teach them/talk to them about?
 - What do you think they have **learned**? Have they shared any experiences with you on this?
 - And what do you think they **did not learn**, or weren't interested in?
 - Did you have any **negative experiences** when mentoring? (e.g., mentees challenging you, conflicts, etc.) What happened and what did you do about it?
 - Can you share a **positive mentoring experience** that you had, one that was particularly meaningful to you?
 - Have you **turned to any adult** (i.e., mentor, supervisor, etc.) for support to mentor/teach other adolescents? How have they supported you? What else would have been helpful?
- [If NOT]: Why do you think this was the case?
26. **How do you feel about the idea of mentoring other adolescents of the same age/group as you? Is it comfortable, uncomfortable, easy, difficult? Why? [probe for examples].**
- Do you feel you have **enough knowledge/training** about these topics to talk to others about them?

27. **Do you think peer mentoring can help adolescents with their problems? What can it do and what is it not good for? Why?**

Impacts

28. **We've discussed what you learned at the MAG. Now I would like to ask you, has anything changed for you in your life after joining the MAG?** [*hold for adolescent answer; then probe if not mentioned before*]:

- a. Have you **applied** any of the new things that you mentioned you learned, outside of the MAG? When and how?
- b. Is there anything you **did** [activities] after taking part in the MAG, that you could not do before?
- c. Have you **felt** any differently about yourself than before you joined the MAG? If yes, in what way?
- d. And what is the **situation now**? Can you still apply the new things you learned and/or do the activities you could not do before? Why/why not?

29. **Has anything changed about your relationship with your family after taking part in the MAG?**

- a. [If YES] How so?
- b. [If NOT] **Why** do you think there has been no change?

30. Have you **talked with your family** about any of the topics/activities that you worked on at the MAG? [*probes: early marriage, early pregnancy, school attendance, role of girls/boys in the family/community*]

[If YES]

- a. **What** did you discuss and **with whom**?
- b. What was their **reaction**? How did they feel about what you learned/did in the MAG? Did they agree or not? Why?
- c. Have you felt any changes in your **family's ideas or in practice** in your daily lives after having these conversations with them?

[If NOT]

Why was this the case? Do you feel you could discuss these topics with them? Why/why not?

31. **If you have a problem or feel worried about something important about your life or your future, who do you go to and why?**

32. **Who makes the decisions in your family?**

33. **Have you ever voiced your opinion with your family about something that concerned you or a member of the family?**

- a. Can you describe the **situation**?
- b. What was their **reaction**?
- c. What **happened** in the end? Was your opinion **considered**? Could you influence the outcome?

34. **Has anyone in your family taken part in a training or a community discussion promoted by IALA?**

[If YES] What do you know about **their participation** in those activities? What did they **share** with you?

35. **Did members of your community participate in the MAGs in any way?** [*e.g., trainings on children's rights, community debates, action plans, etc.*] [*if not mentioned probe*]:

- a. **Who** and **how** did they participate?
- b. Was there a **training on children's rights**? Who took part and what did it entail?
- c. Were there any **community action plans** developed here to support adolescents? Tell me what you know about these [*e.g., what did they entail, who worked on them*]
- d. What was the **outcome** of these activities, as far as you know? Did anything change in your community as a result? [If YES], what and how? [If NOT], Why do you think this was the case?

36. **After the MAG experience, did anything change in your relationship with the community where you live in?** [If YES], **How so?**

- a. Did you ever talk to someone with **decision-making power** in your community about a problem or issue that you were worried about?

[If YES]:

- i. **Why** did you go to them and **how** did you address them? What was their **reaction**?
- ii. Did they **help** you to resolve the problem? Why yes/why not? How?

[If NOT]:

- iii. Do you **know anyone** in your MAG, your friends or other people your age who have done that? What was their experience?
- b. What is your relationship with your community like **now**? Do you feel things are different now than before? Since when, and how so?
37. **After the MAGs finished, did you still do any of the activities you used to do at the MAG, or meet with group members?**
- What activities or meetings did you do and when?
 - Did you have community action plans or community discussions **after the MAGs ended**? What were they about, and how often were they organized? What did they do?
 - And what is the **situation in your community now**? Are any activities still in place or planned?
 - Is there anything you **miss** about the MAGs? What and why?
38. **In your view, what would be the same about your life and what would be different, had you not joined the MAG?**
39. **How do you think adolescents can make a difference in their community? What actions can they take?**
40. **Where do you see yourself when you are 25 years old? How do you imagine your life will be?** [e.g., family life, education, work, location, etc.]

3. IDI Interview Guide – MAG Member Parents

INFORMATION

Date of interview: ___/___/___

Name of interviewer(s):

District:

Village:

MAG:

Age:

Gender:

INFORMED CONSENT

Hello. My name is ... and I work as a consultant for Almansoor Solutions, a research institution based in Afghanistan.

We are doing a study about the **Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) programme** financed by UNICEF, and we would like to hear the **opinions and experiences** of [young people / MAG mentors / parents / religious leaders/ community leaders / teachers/ programme implementers] who took part in it. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to us. We will discuss the following topics: We will discuss the following topics: **the Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs), the MAG Life Skills Training, Community radio/Self-expression training, Community Talks, adolescents' education and the Alternative Learning Centres.**

There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear your views and learn about your experiences. Please do not hesitate to express your opinion, and feel free to share with us any additional information not covered by our questions. Your participation is very much appreciated. This interview will take approximately one hour.

Participation in the interview is **completely voluntary**. You will not be provided with any payment to take part in the research. Please also note that your responses will be utilized only for the purpose of this study, they will remain **anonymous**, and your name will not be displayed. You can refuse to answer any question that you do not want to answer, take a break, or stop the discussion at any time. If you have any concerns, I am happy to talk to you about them or I can put you in contact with my supervisor.

[For young people] You could be referred to supporting services if you require so as well.

With your permission I would like to **audio record** the conversation; in this way I can free myself from taking notes and can listen to you attentively. The audio recording will be solely for the use of this study and will not be used to identify you. [Audio recording will be abandoned if participants object]. Do you have any questions before we start?

[If the respondent allows to interview, make sure to record consent on recorder]

I'm going to press record now and just ask you to confirm again your consent to participate and your agreement with recording the interview.

[Turn recording device on]

- Do you agree to take part in the interview? [YES]
- Do you agree to let me record it? [YES]

Consent provided	<input type="checkbox"/> I Yes (=1)
	<input type="checkbox"/> I No (=0)

Thank you for giving your consent. We can now proceed with the discussion.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

I will ask you first some questions about you and your household.

- **Are you the caregiver of (MAG member's name)? What is your relationship with them?**

- **What is your age?** _____
- **What is your occupation?** _____
- **What is the last year of school you attended?** _____

INTERVIEW GUIDE

MAG Activities

1. **What do you know about the MAG? Please describe briefly what activities took place there, from your knowledge.**
2. **What was your reaction when your son/daughter joined the MAG? What did you think about it then? Did you like it/dislike it? Why?**
3. **Did you take part in the MAG in any way? How and for how long? Tell me about your experience.**
4. **Did your son/daughter take part in a Self-expression training (e.g., writing stories, drawing competitions, participating in debates, etc.)? [If YES]**
 1. What were the **contents** of this training, as far as you know?
 2. What did they **learn** in this training?

3. What do you **think** about the content of this training? Do you **agree or disagree** with what is taught, and why? [*probes: storytelling, drawing, debate, etc.*]
4. Has your son/daughter **shared with you** the content of this training, or the product of their work? [e.g., did they talk about the story they wrote or share their drawings/art?] What did you think about it?
5. **Was your son/daughter part of an Adolescent Radio Listener Group?** [If YES]:
 1. Do you know about the **radio programme “New Homes, New Lives”**? Have you ever heard it? If YES, how **frequently** have you listened to it and **with whom**?
 2. What did you think about the programme? What do you think about the **topics discussed in the programme** and about **how they were discussed**?
 3. What topic did you **enjoy** the most? Why was this important for you?
 4. Have you ever **talked about** what you heard in the programme with your son/daughter? Tell me about these conversations.
6. **Do you know about the Life Skills Training that took place at the MAG?**
 1. What were the **contents** of this training, as far as you know?
 2. What did the adolescents **learn** in this training?
 3. What do you **think** about the content of this training? Do you **agree or disagree** with what is taught, and why? [*probes: ask about each of the modules, e.g., education, personal development, gender, etc.*]

MAG Learning Outcomes

7. **Has your son/daughter discussed with you what they learned in the MAG trainings?**
[If Yes, Tell me about it]
[If No, please share what could be the reasons for not discussing]
8. **Have you seen any changes in your son/daughter since they joined the MAG?**
 1. **What type of changes and where do you see these?** [*pause to hear interviewee’s spontaneous answers; then probe on both positive and negative changes*]

[if not mentioned before, continue with the following probes, asking each and in what way this is shown]:

9. **Have you noticed any changes in:**
 1. **their confidence level? How so?**
 2. **their communication skills, within and outside the household? How so?**
 3. **their expression of emotions, in the household or outside? How so?**
 4. **their ability to make everyday decisions? How so?**
 5. **their ability to make important decisions, such as about their future? How so?**

[if not specifically mentioned, please explore]:

10. **What type of decisions do you allow your son to take? What type of decisions do you allow your daughter to take?** [*i.e. going to the market, going out of the house, meeting friends, doing sports, going to school, etc. [If they don’t have both sons AND daughters, probe with projection: “If you had a boy/girl”...*]
11. **Do you trust your son/daughter to make decisions? How would you react if they differ from what you would have done? Has this happened to you? Please tell me about it.**
12. **Is your son/daughter discussing their problems or concerns more often than before taking part in the MAG?]**[If YES] **How so?**
 1. Has your son/daughter **voiced concerns with you or someone else in the family** about any matter that concerns them or the family?
 2. Has your son/daughter **approached any member of the community or a community leader** with regard to any concern about adolescents’ well-being in the community?

Education

13. **During their time at the MAG, did your son/daughter bring up the topic of their education to discuss with you?**
 1. What did you **discuss** about? What did **they think** about this, and what **did you think** about it/what was your response?
 2. Did they **attend school** when they took part in the MAG? Do they attend now?
 3. How was the **MAG different from school**? How do you compare what they learned at school and what they learned at the MAG?
 4. Has the MAG **changed how your son/daughter felt about school** in any way? How/why?
14. **How does your son/daughter feel about school now?**

15. **How do you feel about them going/not going to school?** [If they attend]: **How satisfied are you with their schooling?**
16. **Is any of your children going to an Alternative Learning Centre (ALC)?** [If YES]
1. **How** did you learn about ALCs, and how did your son/daughter **join** there? Was your son/daughter **informed** about the ALCs through the MAGs?
 2. What **type of activities** do they do at the ALC? What do they **learn** there? How is ALC **different from formal school**?
 3. How **satisfied** are you with the schooling at ALC? What do you like about it?
 4. Is there anything you **do not like** or that you think should be changed? [*probes: venue, learning contents, learning materials, flexible timetables, teachers, attendance, etc.*]
17. **Do you think school is equally important for boys and girls? Why/why not? Should both boys and girls attend school?**
1. Are all your children of school age **attending** school? Why/why not?
18. **Do girls in your area leave school earlier than boys? If so, why is that? What do you think about this?**

Gender Norms and Roles (incl. marriage and pregnancy)

19. **During their experience at the MAG, did you son/daughter come to talk to you about gender norms? What is it like to be a boy or a girl in this community, what is expected from girls and boys?**
1. What was the discussion **about**? What did they **think** about this? And what was your **reaction**? What did you **tell** them?
 2. Did they bring up the topic of **marriage**? What did they say/think about it and how did you address this?
 3. Did they bring up the topic of **pregnancy**? What did they say/think about it and how did you address this?
20. **Have you had any recent conversations with your son/daughter about these topics? Tell me about them.**
21. **At what age do you think it's appropriate for a girl to be married? And for a boy? Why at that age? Did you discuss this topic with your children? What do they think about it?**
22. **Did you marry or intend to marry any of your children? If yes, who and at what age? Why did you think they should get married?**
1. **Who should decide** when a **boy** is to be married? Does the boy ever decide? (why/why not). And who should decide when a **girl** is to be married? Does the girl ever decide? (why/why not).
 2. How are decisions made with regard to the **match of bride and groom**/the **time of the marriage**/the **dowry amount**? Which family members are involved? Which community members are involved?
23. **Did your son/daughter mention to you any other topics that they discussed in the MAGs? Please tell us about it.**

Community Participation and Community Talks

24. **Who are the influential people in your community?** [await for interviewee's response] **Do they get involved in adolescents' issues? In what ways?**
25. **Are there any practices in your community that you consider harmful to adolescents' well-being? Which are these?** [e.g., child marriage, dowry, domestic violence, baad, and baadal, etc.]
1. Do you think **something can be done** to change them? What can be done and by whom?
 2. Have you ever talked about this with **other members of the community**? What have you discussed?
26. **Have there been any community talks organized by IALA in your community about issues affecting adolescents?**
1. **When** were these and what was the **purpose** of these discussions?
 2. Did you **take part** in these discussions? If so, for **how long** and in **what ways**? If no, why so?
 3. **Who else** took part in these discussions? [i.e shura leaders, religious leaders, teachers, adolescents, etc.]
 4. Could **adolescents voice their opinions** in these discussions? In what ways?
 5. What were these discussions **about**?

27. **What was discussed about early marriage?**
1. How did community members **react** to these discussions? What were their **views**? Were there differences in how **men and women** responded to these issues? Which and why?
 2. How did you **feel** about these discussions? What did you **learn**? Was there anything you could **apply** to your own life, with your family?
 3. Have you perceived any **changes** in people that took part in the community discussions regarding views on early marriage? [If yes], what do you feel has changed and why?
28. **What was discussed about girls' rights and the value of girls?**
1. How did community members **react** to these discussions? What were their **views**? Were there differences in how **men and women** responded to these issues? Which and why?
 2. How did you **feel** about these discussions? What did you **learn**? Was there anything you could **apply** to your own life, with your family?
 3. Have you perceived any **changes** in the people that took part in the community discussions regarding views about girls' rights? [If yes], what do you feel has changed and why?
29. **What was discussed about adolescents' education?**
1. How did community members **react** to these discussions? What were their **views**? Were there differences in how **men and women** responded to these issues? Which and why?
 2. How did you **feel** about these discussions? What did you **learn**? Was there anything you could **apply** to your own life, with your family?
 3. Have you perceived any **changes** in the people that took part in the community discussions regarding adolescents' education? [If YES], what do you feel has changed and why?
30. **What do you think these discussions achieved overall?**
1. Were these discussions **helpful** for the community in any way?
 2. Was there anything that you **did not like** about them?
 3. How could they have been **more helpful or appropriate**? What would you change?
31. **Were Community Action Plans developed as part of the community discussions? Tell me about them** [e.g., goals, content, activities, participants] [If interviewee is not aware continue with next questions]
1. Were the activities of the **Action Plans implemented**? Which ones, for how long, by whom and for what?
 2. What has been **achieved** from the Community Action Plans, in your view, and what hasn't? Why do you think this has been the case?
32. **Do you think these community talks have contributed to change ideas about child protection issues in this community? Why/why not? Where do you appreciate this?**
1. How is the **situation now**? Were [any] **changes maintained** or not? Why? What do you think has **changed** and what has **remained the same** after the programme ended?
33. **Do you know if any of these community talks still took place after the programme ended?**
1. **When and how?**
 2. **Why** do you think this was the case?
 3. If they have continued, **how often** do they take place and **who is involved**?
 4. What is the **situation now**? **How likely** do you think it is that they will continue in the future?
34. **Have there been any changes in the services available to adolescents in the area, or in adolescents' outreach to these services? In what ways?**
1. How is the **situation now**? Were [any] **changes maintained** or not? What do you think has changed and what has remained the same after the programme ended?

Overall Impacts

35. **What do you think the IALA programme managed to change in your community?**
36. **How do you imagine your son/daughter's life would have been, should they not have had the MAG? What would be the same and what would be different, in your view?**
37. **Is there anything you would change, if the programme was implemented again? How can it be improved, in your view?**
38. **What actions can be taken to improve adolescents' lives in your community at present?**

We have finished our interview. Thank you very much for your time and participation. Please feel free to contact us in case you would like to know more about the study or if you have additional information to share.

4. IDI Interview Guide – Community & Religious Leaders

INFORMATION

Date of interview: ___/___/___

Name of interviewer(s):

District:

Village:

MAG:

Age:

Gender:

INTRODUCTION

Hello. My name is ... and I work as a consultant for Almansoor Solutions, a research institution based in Afghanistan.

We are doing a study about the **Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) programme** financed by UNICEF, and we would like to hear the **opinions and experiences** of [young people / MAG mentors / parents / religious leaders/ community leaders / teachers/ programme implementers] who took part in it. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to us. We will discuss the following topics: We will discuss the following topics: **the Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs), the MAG Life Skills Training, Community radio/Self-expression training, Community Talks, adolescents' education, and the Alternative Learning Centres.**

There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear your views and learn about your experiences. Please do not hesitate to express your opinion, and feel free to share with us any additional information not covered by our questions. Your participation is very much appreciated. This interview will take approximately one hour.

Participation in the interview is **completely voluntary**. You will not be provided with any payment to take part in the research. Please also note that your responses will be utilized only for the purpose of this study, they will remain **anonymous**, and your name will not be displayed. You can refuse to answer any question that you do not want to answer, take a break, or stop the discussion at any time. If you have any concerns, I am happy to talk to you about them or I can put you in contact with my supervisor.

[For young people] You could be referred to supporting services if you require so as well.

With your permission I would like to **audio record** the conversation; in this way I can free myself from taking notes and can listen to you attentively. The audio recording will be solely for the use of this study and will not be used to identify you. [Audio recording will be abandoned if participants object]. Do you have any questions before we start?

[If the respondent allows to interview, make sure to record consent on recorder]

I'm going to press record now and just ask you to confirm again your consent to participate and your agreement with recording the interview.

[Turn recording device on]

- Do you agree to take part in the interview? [YES]
- Do you agree to let me record it? [YES]

Consent provided	<input type="checkbox"/> I Yes (=1) <input type="checkbox"/> I No (=0)
------------------	---

Thank you for giving your consent. We can now proceed with the discussion.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

I will ask you first some questions about you.

- **What is your occupation?** _____
- **What is the last year of school you attended?** _____
- **What is your religion?** _____

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. **Tell me about your work/role in this community. What do you do? Since when do you have this role?**
2. **What problems do you see adolescents face in this community? Why do you think this is?**
 - a. What problems or challenges do you think particularly affect **boys**, and why?
 - b. What problems or challenges do you think particularly affect **girls**, and why?
3. **Do you think boys and girls are treated equally in this community? How so? And why is that?**
4. **Do you think school is equally important for boys and for girls? Why/why not? Should both boys and girls attend school?**

5. **Do girls in this area leave school earlier than boys? If so, why is that? What do you think about that?**
6. **Regarding marriage:**
 - a. At **what age** do you think it's appropriate for a **girl to be married**? And for a **boy**? **Why** at that age?
 - b. **Who should decide** when a boy is to be married? Does the boy ever decide? (why/why not?). And who should decide when a girl is to be married? Does the girl ever decide? (why/why not?).
 - c. How are decisions made with regard to the **match of bride and groom/the time of the marriage/the dowry/mahr amount**? Which family members are involved? Which community members are involved?
7. **Are there any practices in your community that you consider harmful to adolescents' well-being? Which are these and why?**
8. **Is child marriage common in your community? And the practice of dowry/mahr or baad/baadal? Why do you think these are practiced?**

Training on Children's Rights and Islam

I understand that you took part in the training Children's Rights and Islam. I will ask you some questions about this now.

9. **How did you learn about this training? How did you join?** [e.g. social worker/NGO, government officials/other sources?]
10. **Can you tell us why you joined the training on Children Rights and Islam?**
11. **Regarding the training arrangements:**
 - a. **Who** gave the training? And **who else** took part in it?
 - b. **How long** did it last and **where** did it take place?
 - c. Was the **venue suitable** to have this training, in your view? Why? Would it have been different if it had taken place elsewhere?
12. **What was the content of this training? What topics did you discuss?**
13. **How satisfied were you with the training?** [probes: training contents; trainer; training arrangements such as frequency, setting, etc.]
 - a. What did you **like** about the training and why?
 - b. What did you **not like**? Was there anything that you didn't find **useful or appropriate**? What and why?
14. **What knowledge do you consider you gained from this training?** [pause for answers, then probe]
 - a. Tell me the **three most important things** that you learned in this training.
15. **What did the training teach you about early marriage?**
16. **Did you perceive any changes in participants' views on early marriage after the training?** [If YES] **What changed and why?** [If NO] **Why do you think?**
 - a. How do participants feel about this **at present**? Has anything **changed about them**? [If YES], what and how?
17. **What did the training teach you about girls' rights? Please explain.**
 - a. What **knowledge** do you have now with the training, that you didn't have before?
18. **Did you perceive any changes in the participants views about girls' rights after the training?** [If yes], **what changed and why?** [If NO] **Why do you think?**
 - a. **And about girls' education?**
 - b. How do participants feel about these issues **at present**? Has anything **changed**? What and how?
19. **Have you applied what you learned/discussed in your work with the community? How so? Please provide examples.**
 - a. How **useful** do you think these learnings are for your community work?

20. **Did you bring back any of the topics you discussed at the training to your own sermons/discussions with community members?**

- a. **Which** and **how** did you address these? Please provide **examples**
- b. What **platforms** do you use to reach community members? [*i.e., usual religious meetings, community talks, school-based dialogues, media, etc.*]
- c. What have been your **members' responses** to these discussions/teachings?

21. **Which religious or legal texts are your guides for discussing child/adolescent protection in your work in the community?** [*e.g., if religious leader, in worship services, religious education, or special religious events?*]

22. **Did you participate in any other IALA activities, for example, did you engage with the MAG groups in any way? How so?**

[If NO] **Did you hear of the MAG groups? What did you find out?**

23. **How often do you meet and talk directly with adolescents, and in which contexts?**

- a. What **topics/issues** do you most talk about with them?
- b. **How often** do you speak with adolescent **boys**? And with adolescent **girls**?
- c. Do adolescents ever **come to you for advice** or to discuss a problem? Please provide examples.

24. **What do you think can still be done to prevent social norms and practices that are harmful towards adolescents?**

- a. What would help to **denounce** harmful social norms against adolescents?
- b. How can **people like you** (religious leaders, village leaders, birth registers) **influence the community** to protect adolescents?
- c. What **norms/practices** can be influenced and how?
- d. Have you ever **talked about these practices** with members of the community? What have you discussed? What have been the **responses** of your community members?

25. **Have you taken other actions to protect adolescents against practices that you think are harmful to them?**

- a. Please describe **which actions** and **in which contexts**.
- b. What has **worked well**? What could be **improved** and how?
- c. [for Imam] Have you ever **refused to marry** a couple? If so, why? What were the ages of the girl and the boy?

Community Talks

26. **What were the community talks organized by IALA? Please describe these in your own words.**

- a. **When** were these and what was the **purpose** of these discussions?
- b. **Who** did they include [*i.e. shura leaders, religious leaders, teachers, adolescents, etc.*] and **how often** did they take place?
- c. Could **adolescents voice their opinions** in these discussions? In what ways?

27. **What has been your role/participation in the community talks that have taken place in this community?**

28. **What topics have you discussed at these community dialogues?**

- a. Could you discuss these topics together or separately with **male and female audiences**? What was your **approach**?

[*probing about early marriage, girls' rights, education*]

29. **What was discussed about early marriage?**

- a. How did community members **react** to these discussions? What were their **views**?
- b. What ideas/messages did they **agree with or accept**?
- c. What ideas/messages did they **resist/not agree with**, and **why**?
- d. Were there **differences in how men and women** responded to these issues? Which and why?
- e. What kind of **questions** did you get, and how did you respond to these?
- f. Could you give me some **examples** of the community's responses?
- g. How did you **feel** about these discussions? What did you **learn**?
- h. Have you perceived any **changes** in the people that took part in the community discussions regarding views about early marriage? [If YES], what do you feel has changed and why?

30. **What was discussed about girls' rights and the value of girls?**
- How did community members **react** to these discussions? What were their **views**?
 - What ideas/messages did they **agree with or accept**?
 - What ideas/messages did they **resist/not agree with**, and **why**?
 - Were there **differences in how men and women** responded to these issues? Which and why?
 - What kind of **questions** did you get, and how did you respond to these?
 - Could you give me some **examples** of the community's responses?
 - How did you **feel** about these discussions? What did you **learn**?
 - Have you perceived any **changes** in the people that took part in the community discussions regarding views about girls' rights? [If yes], what do you feel has changed and why?
31. **What was discussed about adolescents' education?**
- How did community members **react** to these discussions? What were their **views**?
 - What ideas/messages did they **agree with or accept**?
 - What ideas/messages did they **resist/not agree with**, and **why**?
 - Were there **differences in how men and women** responded to these issues? Which and why?
 - What kind of **questions** did you get, and how did you respond to these?
 - Could you give me some **examples** of the community's responses?
 - How did you **feel** about these discussions? How did you **feel** about these discussions? What did you **learn**?
 - Have you perceived any **changes** in the people that took part in the community discussions regarding adolescents' education? [If YES], what do you feel has changed and why?
21. **What are the difficulties you faced while discussing/ challenging practices and norms affecting boys or girls?**
- Which **issues/practices** do you find more difficult to discuss? **Why** was this?
 - With whom?** [within the community / outside the community / with specific sub-groups]
 - How did you deal with these challenges?**
22. **What do you think these discussions achieved overall?**
- Were these discussions **helpful** for the community in any way? [IF YES/NO] How and why?
 - Was there anything that you **did not like** about them?
 - How could they have been **more helpful or appropriate**? What would you change?
23. **Were Community Action Plans developed as part of the community discussions? Tell me about them** [e.g., goals, content, activities, participants]
- Were the activities of the **Action Plans implemented**? Which ones, for how long, by whom and for what?
 - What has been **achieved** from the Community Action Plans, in your view, and what hasn't? Why do you think this has been the case?
24. **Do you think these community talks have contributed to change ideas about child protection issues in this community? Why/why not? Where do you appreciate this?**
- How is the **situation now**? Were [any] **changes maintained** or not? Why? What do you think has **changed** and what has **remained the same** after the programme ended?
25. **Did community talks continue to take place after the programme ended?**
- When and how?**
 - Why** do you think this was the case?
 - If they have continued, **how often** do they take place and **who is involved**?
 - What is the **situation now**? **How likely** do you think it is that they will continue in the future?
26. **Have there been any changes in the services available to adolescents in the area, or in adolescents' outreach to these services? In what ways?**
- How is the **situation now**? Were [any] **changes maintained** or not? What do you think has changed and what has remained the same after the programme ended?
27. **Have there been any changes in other issues affecting adolescents after the programme ended? Which and why?**

- a. How is the **situation now**? Were [any] **changes maintained** or not? What do you think has changed and what has remained the same after the programme ended?

Overall Impacts

28. **What do you think the IALA programme overall has managed to change in the community?**
29. **What has IALA not managed to change and why?**
30. **How do you imagine adolescents' lives in this community would have been without the implementation of this programme? What would be the same and what would be different, in your view?**
31. **Is there anything you would change if the programme was implemented again? How can it be improved??**
32. **What actions can be taken to improve adolescents' lives in your community at present?**

We have finished our interview. Thank you very much for your time and participation. Please feel free to contact us in case you would like to know more about the study or if you have additional information to share.

5. IDI Interview Guide – ALC teachers

INFORMATION

Date of interview: ___/___/___

Name of interviewer(s):

District:

Village:

MAG:

Age:

Gender:

INFORMED CONSENT

Hello. My name is ... and I work as a consultant for Almansoor Solutions, a research institution based in Afghanistan.

We are doing a study about the **Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) programme** financed by UNICEF, and we would like to hear the **opinions and experiences** of [young people / MAG mentors / parents / religious leaders/ community leaders / teachers/ programme implementers] who took part in it. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to us. We will discuss the following topics: We will discuss the following topics: **the Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs), the MAG Life Skills Training, Community radio/Self-expression training, Community Talks, adolescents' education and the Alternative Learning Centers.**

There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear your views and learn about your experiences. Please do not hesitate to express your opinion, and feel free to share with us any additional information not covered by our questions. Your participation is very much appreciated. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

Participation in the interview is **completely voluntary**. You will not be provided with any payment to take part in the research. Please also note that your responses will be utilized only for the purpose of this study, they will remain **anonymous**, and your name will not be displayed. You can refuse to answer any question that you do not want to answer, take a break, or stop the discussion at any time. If you have any concerns, I am happy to talk to you about them or I can put you in contact with my supervisor.

[For young people] You could be referred to supporting services if you require so as well.

With your permission I would like to **audio record** the conversation; in this way I can free myself from taking notes and can listen to you attentively. The audio recording will be solely for the use of this study and will not be used to identify you. [Audio recording will be abandoned if participants object]. Do you have any questions before we start?

[If the respondent allows to interview, make sure to record consent on recorder]

I'm going to press record now and just ask you to confirm again your consent to participate and your agreement with recording the interview.

[Turn recording device on]

- Do you agree to take part in the interview? [YES]
- Do you agree to let me record it? [YES]

Consent provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (=1)
	<input type="checkbox"/> No (=0)

Thank you for giving your consent. We can now proceed with the discussion.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

I will ask you first some questions about you and your household.

- **What is your age?** _____
- **What is your current occupation?** _____
- **Where do you work?** _____
- **What is your last year of schooling achieved?** _____

INTERVIEW GUIDE

ALCs & MAGs

1. **How long have you been an ALC teacher and how did you become one?**
2. **Could you describe in detail what your role entails?**
3. **Could you describe the administrative set-up of an ALC?** [probes: yearly calendar, weekly days of school, number of school hours per day/week; amount of classes; number of students and gender; male and female teachers]
4. **Were the ALCs separated by gender or mixed? What do you think works best for learning and why?**
5. **How was the venue where the ALC was held, in terms of building conditions and suitability for teaching?**

6. **What kind of educational equipment did you have access to?** [*e.g., desks, books, blackboards, computers, etc.*]
 - a. How appropriate was this equipment for your needs as a teacher? Was it helpful? Was it enough, or what else would you have needed?
7. **What teaching/learning materials were provided to you?**
 - a. How **appropriate** did you find these for your teaching?
 - b. Were they available in **sufficient quantity** in your ALC, or what else would you have needed?
8. **How was the support of UNICEF to the ALC, overall?**
 - a. **What did UNICEF provide to the ALC?** [*e.g., equipment, materials, training; please describe*]
9. **Have you received any ALC facilitator training?** [If YES]
 - a. **How many** trainings have you received before becoming a facilitator? What did they cover?
 - b. Have you received trainings **while** being an ALC facilitator? Is there any **refresher training** provided? How long was the training and what did it cover?
 - c. What was the **selection** process for this training, to your knowledge?
10. **How would you evaluate the quality of the ALC facilitator training?**
 - a. What were the **best features** about those training sessions? Think about the most favorable experiences you had with the training and tell me about them.
 - b. Now, think about two **least favourable** experiences with these staff development sessions. Why were they not good?
 - c. What **topics** would you like to cover more in trainings?
 - d. Do you think the training you received was **enough to be fully able to teach**? Why/why not?
11. **Did you get any supervision at the ALC and from whom?**
 - a. Was the supervision **helpful** to you? What was the **contribution** of supervisors to you?
 - b. What type of **needs for support** do you report to your superiors / to the NGO?
12. **How would you describe the attendance at the ALC?**
 - a. How did you check **attendance** of children in ALC? Was this every day?
 - b. Did **boys** attend on a regular basis? What about **girls**? How many boys and girls attended? How was this in **comparison to their enrolment**?
 - c. How often do boys **miss school** in a month? How often do girls miss school in a month? What did you do if someone was missing repetitively?
 - d. How did **attendance affect participation** and learning in the ALC?
13. **Do you think the ALC schedule is adapted to adolescent's situations and schedule? Why/why not?**
 - a. Were there any **difficulties** to attend the classes timewise?
 - b. Were there any difficulties in attending due to other reasons? [*i.e. village practices, parental disapproval, etc.*]
 - c. What were the possible **challenges** which can prevent a child from going to the ALC?
 - d. What are the **challenges at present**?
14. **What do you do to reach children/adolescents and address low enrolment?**
 - a. Which specific **groups** are particularly hard to reach/enrol/retain?
 - b. Have you faced any **challenges** in enrolling out-of-school children? Which?
 - c. **Who** else is involved in their outreach and what do they do?
15. **How has participation of adolescents been overall in your ALC?**
 - a. Who **participates** the most? Who does not participate?
 - b. What did you do to **encourage** adolescents to participate in class? What **teaching methods** have you used? What has proven effective and what hasn't?
 - c. What **challenges** have you faced to encourage participation? How do you think participation can be further encouraged?
16. **Were any of your students coming from MAG groups?**

- a. To your knowledge, **why and how** did they join the ALC?
- b. How would you describe their **motivation** towards learning?
- c. How was their **performance** in comparison to your other students?
- d. How was their **participation**, in comparison to the other students?
- e. In your view, did **MAG activities contribute to their attendance** to and/or participation in the ALC? [If YES] In what ways? Why do you think this was the case? [If NOT] Why do you think there was no impact?

17. **In your view, what type of knowledge did the ALC bring to adolescent girls and boys?**

- a. How are the ALC teachings **different from formal school**?
- b. How does the ALC **benefit** out-of-school children's learning? Is the ALC programme is a good **opportunity** for out-of-school children? Why so?
- c. Do you see any **disadvantages** in this type of intervention for children's learning? Which ones and why?

18. **Have you observed any changes (positive or negative) in the perception or behaviours of your students towards school, since they started going to the ALC? Which and where do you appreciate these? Please provide examples.**

19. **To what extent have the ALCs managed to support out-of-school children, in your view? What do you think are the main impacts of ALCs?**

20. **What problems that adolescents face in this community have the ALCs managed to address adolescents?**

- a. Which problems has the ALC **not managed to address/influence**? Why?

21. **What challenges have you faced in delivering the ALC?**

22. **Based on your experience, what could be done to improve education delivery?**

Child Protection

23. **What type of child protection issues did you integrate in your teachings?**

- a. **Why** did you discuss these issues at your ALC?
- b. How were these received by students? What were their **responses**?

24. **What child protection issues have you discussed informally or outside school with the adolescents?** [*probe: education, child marriage, girls' rights, others*] **How have you addressed these and what has been your experience? Please provide examples.**

25. **What child protection issues have you discussed informally or outside school with the adolescents' parents?** [*probes: education, child marriage, girls' rights, etc.*] **How have you addressed these and what has been your experience? Please provide examples.**

Community Talks

26. **Have you taken part in the Community Discussions organized by [Aga Khan Foundation/World Vision] on child protection issues?**

[If NO]: **Why haven't you taken part?**

Have you taken part in any other initiatives to promote child protection in your community? Please elaborate.

[If YES, continue to next question]

27. **Regarding the community discussions:**

- a. **How often** have these taken place in this community and **who** has taken part?
- b. Could **adolescents voice their opinions** in these discussions? In what ways?
- c. What have these discussions been **about/what topics** were discussed?
- d. What were the community members' **responses** to the community discussions? And how have **you felt** about these and why?
- e. Were these discussions **helpful** for the community in any way? [If YES], how so?
- f. Was there anything that you **did not like** about them?
- g. How could they have been **more helpful or appropriate**? What would you change?

28. **Were Community Action Plans developed as part of the community discussions? Tell me about them** [*e.g., goals, content, activities, participants*]

- a. Were the activities of the **Action Plans implemented**? Which ones, for how long, by whom and for what?

b. What has been **achieved** from the Community Action Plans, in your view, and what hasn't? Why do you think this has been the case?

29. **Did community talks continue to take place after the programme ended?**

- a. **When and how?**
- b. **Why** do you think this was the case?
- c. If they have continued, **how often** do they take place and **who is involved?**
- d. What is the **situation now?** **How likely** do you think it is that they will continue in the future?

Overall Impacts

30. **After the implementation of IALA, did you see any changes in community practices towards:**

- a. **Early marriage and early pregnancy?**
- b. And **access to education for adolescents/school attendance?**
- c. In **other issues** affecting adolescents?
- d. Have there been any changes in the **services** available to adolescents in the area, or in adolescents' outreach to these services? In what ways?
- e. How is the **situation now?** Were [any] **changes maintained** or not? What do you think has changed and what has remained the same after the programme ended?

31. **What do you think the IALA programme overall has managed to change in the community?**

32. **What has IALA not managed to change and why?**

33. **How do you imagine adolescents' lives in this community would have been without the implementation of this programme? What would be the same and what would be different, in your view?**

34. **Is there anything you would change if the programme was implemented again?**

35. **What actions can be taken to improve adolescents' lives in your community at present?**

- a. What actions would be useful to **help out-of-school children** in particular?

We have finished our interview. Thank you very much for your time and participation.

Please feel free to contact us in case you would like to know more about the study or if you have additional information to share.

6. KII Interview Guide – Local Implementers

INFORMATION

Date of interview: ___/___/___

Name of interviewer(s):

District:

Position of respondent:

Age: **Gender:**

INFORMED CONSENT

Hello. My name is ... and I work as a consultant for Almansoora Solutions, a research institution based in Afghanistan. We are doing a study about the **Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) programme** implemented by UNICEF and we would like to hear about your institution’s involvement in this programme and explore child protection issues more generally in Afghanistan.. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to us. We will discuss the following topics: the **Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs)**, the **Like Skills trainings**, the **Self-expression trainings and Community Radio** and the **Community Talks**.

There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear your views and learn about your experiences. Please do not hesitate to express your opinion, and feel free to share with us any additional information not covered by our questions. Your participation is very much appreciated. This interview will take approximately one hour to one hour and thirty minutes.

Participation in the interview is **completely voluntary**. You will not be provided with any payment to take part in the research. Please also note that your responses will be utilized only for the purpose of this study, they will remain **anonymous**, and your name will not be displayed. You can refuse to answer any question that you do not want to answer, take a break or stop the discussion at any time. If you have any concerns, I am happy to talk to you about them or I can put you in contact with my supervisor. His name is and his telephone number is [For young people] You could be referred to supporting services if you require so as well.

With your permission I would like to **audio record** the conversation; in this way I can free myself from taking notes and can listen to you attentively. The audio recording will be solely for the use of this study and will not be used to identify you. [Audio recording will be abandoned if participants object]. Do you have any questions before we start?

I’m going to press record now and just ask you to confirm again your consent to participate and your agreement with recording the interview.

[Turn recording device on]

- Do you agree to take part in the interview? [YES]
- Do you agree to let me record it? [YES]

Consent provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (=1)
	<input type="checkbox"/> No (=0)

7. KII Interview Guide – National Stakeholders

INFORMATION

Date of interview: ___/___/___

Name of interviewer(s):

District:

Position of respondent:

Age:

Gender:

INTRODUCTION

Hello. My name is ... and I work as a consultant for Almansoora Solutions, a research institution based in Afghanistan. We are doing a study about the **Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (IALA) programme** implemented by UNICEF and we would like to hear about your institution’s involvement in this programme and explore child protection issues more generally in Afghanistan.. Thank you very much for accepting to talk to us. We will discuss the following topics: the **Multi-Purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs)**, the **Like Skills trainings**, the **Self-expression trainings and Community Radio** and the **Community Talks**.

There are no right or wrong answers, we just want to hear your views and learn about your experiences. Please do not hesitate to express your opinion, and feel free to share with us any additional information not covered by our questions. Your participation is very much appreciated. This interview will take approximately one hour to one hour and thirty minutes.

Participation in the interview is **completely voluntary**. You will not be provided with any payment to take part in the research. Please also note that your responses will be utilized only for the purpose of this study, they will remain **anonymous**, and your name will not be displayed. You can refuse to answer any question that you do not want to answer, take a break or stop the discussion at any time. If you have any concerns, I am happy to talk to you about them or I can put you in contact with my supervisor.

With your permission I would like to **audio record** the conversation; in this way I can free myself from taking notes and can listen to you attentively. The audio recording will be solely for the use of this study and will not be used to identify you. *[Audio recording will be abandoned if participants object]*. Do you have any questions before we start?

I’m going to press record now and just ask you to confirm again your consent to participate and your agreement with recording the interview.

[Turn recording device on]

- Do you agree to take part in the interview? [YES]
- Do you agree to let me record it? [YES]

Consent provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (=1)
	<input type="checkbox"/> No (=0)

ANNEX 6. LIST OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Document name
ROSA ADAP KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT, AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY REPORT, June 2019
EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME ON IMPROVING ADOLESCENTS' LIVES IN AFGHANISTAN, MIDLINE REPORT, October 2019

ANNEX 7. RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

unicef  | for every child

Research Ethics Approval

22 November 2021

Dr. Ravi Baghel
Senior Qualitative Research & Evaluation Manager
Qualitative Research Department
Center for Evaluation and Development
O7 3, 68161 Mannheim, Germany

RE: Ethics Review Board findings for: *Qualitative End-line Improving Adolescents Lives in Afghanistan (LALA)* (HML IRB Review #467AFGH21)

Dear Dr. Baghel,

Protocols for the protection of human subjects in the above study were assessed through a research ethics review by HML Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 15 – 22 November 2021. This study's human subjects' protection protocols, as stated in the materials submitted, received **ethics review approval**.

You and your project staff remain responsible for ensuring compliance with HML IRB's determinations. Those responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ensuring prompt reporting to HML IRB of proposed changes in this study's design, risks, consent, or other human protection protocols and providing copies of any revised materials;
- conducting the research activity in accordance with the terms of the IRB approval until any proposed changes have been reviewed and approved by the IRB, except when necessary to mitigate hazards to subjects;
- promptly reporting any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others in the course of this study;
- notifying HML IRB when your study is completed.

HML IRB is authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections (IRB #1211, IORG #850, FWA #1102).

Sincerely,



D. Michael Anderson, Ph.D., MPH
Chair & Human Subjects Protections Director, HML IRB

cc: Ivan Ssenkubuge, Penelope Lantz, JD

Health Media Lab, Inc.
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 450
Washington, DC 20036 USA
+1.202.246.8504
unicef@hmlirb.com www.hmlirb.com

